





# Changing the Community

INTERPETER TRAINING

AND

ITS IMPACT ON THE DEAF AND  
HEARING COMMUNITY

FINAL REPORT TO THE NUFFIELD  
FOUNDATION

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The work described in this project report took place over many years. It began in 1991 with a training programme and continued with action in the community and then research. There was an interim report in 1994 and then a further period of research and analysis. In the last four years the programme has become established as a mainstream degree programme in the University of Bristol and the impact on the community of deaf people has become more apparent.

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Jim Kyle and Eva Fielding-Jackson  
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## Executive Summary

It is always thought that deaf people suffer from lack of access to information. Somehow the accumulated knowledge of society is stored in some written or spoken form and the key for deaf people is to open up a means of access to that store of knowledge. However, while we can see the need for deaf people to know what hearing people have developed over the years, we also feel that the system of access which is to be created has to allow deaf people to make their contribution to that store of knowledge. In fact, deaf people are members of the community just as hearing people are. What they have to say enhances and enriches our knowledge. When we think of sign language interpreting we consider it to be a two way process – one which offers information transfer to deaf and to hearing people. Only when we develop sufficient resource to offer this service freely and effectively will we be able to change the community. This was the starting point for this project.

### *The Study*

This report is the culmination of a research and development project, which began in September 1991 and can be said to continue to today and whose effects will continue to be felt for at least another ten years. It deals with the provision of training for sign language interpreters and the assessment of the impact of this training and the perceived benefits and changes within the deaf community in this period.

As with all projects of research and development, the image of the project after ten years is a little different from that at the beginning. Most of the main goals have been reached but there have been major changes in the situation of deaf people locally and nationally. Our partner organisation, the RNID, has also been engaged in major changes and the services which they provide have been sensitive to the needs of the users and significantly, to the funders of provision. The outcome is a report which spans the provision of training, the assessment of individuals who have completed that training, the operation of a local agency designed to employ the interpreters who have been trained in the period and the feelings of deaf people within the communities served by the agency.

There are 5 main parts:

- (1) The situation as it was in 1991 in relation to the training and provision of interpreters
- (2) The training which was created and the issues which arose
- (3) The developments in the field - The RNID and the Agency provision in the region (an account of the operation of Wessex)
- (4) Reactions of deaf people and of the interpreters
- (5) Outcomes and Implications for services and for training and the development of our model of interpreting.

Sections 1-3 are self-explanatory. Section 4 involved

- (a) The setting up of the study, the working group and the implementation of the questionnaire survey and the interviews
- (b) The data collection
  - (i) Interview/returns from students and staff at the Centre for Deaf Studies.

- (ii) Interviews/returns from interpreters working within the region through the agency
- (iii) Interviews/returns from deaf users of the agency
- (iv) Interviews of deaf people who have not been users of the agency but may have experience of interpreting

The rationale for the use of the fourth group is that they are representative of the community as a whole and gave an indication of the issues which arose in delivering a service and in informing the potential users of the possibilities.

The primary analysis is quantitative but there has been a great deal of qualitative material provided by the respondents.

#### *The Deaf Community*

Despite the social labels attached to deaf people and the lower social position accorded to them by our society, they are a cohesive community with a distinct language. As our research has developed in the UK it has become clear that there is also a strong and dynamic culture present in deaf people's lives. Up to this time, the potential of deaf people has not been realised. We know from simple research, that deaf people have the same intellectual ability as hearing people; we know also that they occupy jobs at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Their problem has been simple - access.

As long as the language of deaf people has not been recognised there has been little attempt to provide the service which would ensure that they can participate fully in the life of the community. Following an examination of deaf people's views and a survey of the service agencies in Health, Education and Social Services in the Western area of England, a project has been mounted to create a training programme linked to an agency provision for sign language interpreters.

#### *Results in the Development Aspect*

By mid 2001, over 120 interpreters have completed the programme and more than half are working in the field. A further 50 are still in the programme. Twenty more interpreters from Ireland, 5 from Portugal and 10 from Greece, were trained in the same framework, but with a European grant – ESF HORIZON. The planned agency has been set up by the RNID and is now functioning with a brief to cover a wide geographic area in the South-West of England. Services to deaf people are now free at point of service wherever the authority or institution has contracted those services.

#### *Results of the Research Component*

*Impact on the Deaf Community*

It is fair to claim that there has been a huge impact on the deaf community of the creation and development of interpreter training and interpreting services. It is also fair to say that this impact has not always made everyone happy since by providing access, it is becoming more obvious what deaf people have been missing all this time. By offering training, it has become clear what the weaknesses are and where there is a need for training both in the provision and in the provision of the services. By providing services, expectations are raised and these cannot always be met by the supply and the quality of the interpreting.

Yet deaf people can now expect to have interpreters in a whole range of work and social settings and with the expansion in sources of funding there is more hope than ever that deaf people can find the means to participate in society.

## **Chapter 1: Background**

As far we can determine, deaf people have always signed. From our earliest records in 1644, we can see the basis of the sign language, which is present in the UK today. As our services to different groups began to be established in the 19th century, it became clear that deaf people needed the support of welfare workers to ensure their participation in society. Such welfare provision too often took control of deaf people's lives but at least served the function of ensuring that deaf people in a range of situations had a voice and had some limited access to the information in the society around them.

Nevertheless, deaf people remained under-represented in, and mostly hidden from, the community at large, until the widespread use of video made it possible to begin to study sign language. At that point the needs of deaf people became more apparent and the services themselves began to need training in order to meet what appeared to be the new requirements of deaf people for full access to all the information, which the society provided.

Although social workers had in some senses taken over the role of the welfare worker, there began to be a clear split in the 1980s between the social work support role and the access role, which interpreters met. As a result a new profession came into being - sign language interpreting. Without an educational base, there was generally no training and increasing opportunities for deaf people began to put colossal stress on those few people who could act in the interpreting role. As a result training was called for and various attempts were made to implement part-time programmes. It was obvious that this would fall short.

As a result, this project came into being, not only to train the interpreters on a realistic basis - over two years full-time - but also to monitor the impact of the new interpreting possibilities. To deliver the interpreting service to the users - deaf people - agencies have been formed in various parts of the UK. The Wessex Agency came into being at exactly the same time as the course of training was developed. This project became an examination of training, of provision and of the effects of this provision. This report presents the results of the research, which was carried out.

### **1.1 The Deaf Community**

Deaf people form a community within society in Britain. They do not live together in a single geographic area and they do not necessarily work together in close proximity. However, their extensive social contact with each other and their marriage patterns which ensure the maintenance of customs and traditions, support the view that they are an important cohesive community in the UK. Their presence is increasingly noticed in the media and their voice is heard more and more in the political and social world.

Research in Bristol in the last 20 years has contacted the deaf members of the community and explored their views of society. They see their deafness as a difference but not as a handicap. Most of the time they reject the medical view, which defines their deafness in audiometric terms - the hearing loss is classified as profound, severe, partial and so on. These labels tell us

very little about functioning and nothing about how the deaf people function in their community. Membership of the community is determined by attitude and experience. A particularly important dimension is what is considered a “deaf attitude” which means that the person chooses to associate with other deaf people. Although hearing people have considered the community as isolated, this view fails to realise the resource, which the community offers to its members. Deaf people experience their greatest isolation when they are with hearing people. It is only then that their difference becomes a major problem. The difficulty of following communication in speech and the lack of understanding of one’s own attempts to communicate make the contact of deaf and hearing people very tense. The result is that deaf people are excluded or withdraw from these sort of encounters. Yet deaf people have no problem in communicating with each other.

### 1.1.1 Culture

While the community life has become recognised as a resource to deaf people, the ties which bind the community have begun to be seen as part of a culture, to all intents and purpose, as complex as the culture of any minority group. There are a number of dimensions of the culture and identity, which mark out those deaf people who are involved. The extent of the denial of deafness and the educational regimes, which most deaf people have experienced, has provided a deafness-hearingness dimension, which is seen as very important. Deaf people are seen in terms of their desire and commitment to the community. Markers of culture are often therefore, distinctions between deafness and hearingness. Jokes are told about hearing people; problems that arise are seen in terms of the closeness to hearing customs and so on.

Characteristics of the visual modality are also a major component of the way in which deaf people’s culture in interaction is expressed. Deaf people gain attention through visual means - waving, switching the lights on and off, banging on a surface and so on.

Traditions and social structures and history are all being researched at this time, but it seems clear that again these will be fundamental feature of the culture of deaf people. The final component of deaf culture is the one, which is most often used as its emblem: sign language.

### 1.1.2 Language

Although it has only been recognised very recently, deaf people communicate using a rich and fluent language which can be traced back over 350 years. It is not derived from English and it is not a picture language. It is not a set of gestures - since it cannot be readily understood by hearing people. It is not concrete or limited. It can be shown by linguistic analysis to have all the features which languages share and has an extensive and as yet, incompletely researched grammar and lexicon.

Although the most obvious component of sign language for hearing people is the hand movement, sign uses the face, head, eyes, lips and body to convey meaning. Just as with spoken language signs can be broken down **into** smaller components for analysis - like syllables. In the same way, signs can be combined to form compounds and new signs and signs can be inflected. It is this process of inflection which gives sign its richness. In English, verbs are altered for tense and adverbs are used to provide aspect - he looked over and over again - here the verb is marked with *ed* for past tense and the adverbial phrase *over and over again* is used to

indicate the type of looking. In sign there is no tense marking (there are many languages like this) but the aspect is shown by a change in the internal structure of the verb look. So that in sign, the sentence would have only a single sign – LOOK (slowly reduplicated) - which would carry all the information of the whole English sentence. Many other features are only now being discovered and the gradual description of the language is vital to the better acceptance of deaf people and their community.

### **1.2 Interpreting in Sign Language**

Just as hearing people, when they come together from different countries, require an interpreter to cross the language barriers, deaf people in contact with the hearing community require an interpreter. In this case the interpreter must be able to work from a visual language to a spoken one. The *process* of interpreting is the same whether sign language or spoken language is involved. Until very recently the interpreters for deaf people were drawn from the small group of people who had deaf parents. However, as deaf people become more involved in education and other situations, there has been a huge increase in demand. If we allow each deaf person to have 10 hours of interpreting in one year (as a guide, a student at University would need to have 200 hours per year), then there is an immediate need for around 250 interpreters in the UK. There are currently 112 registered Qualified interpreters and 200 or so registered Trainee Interpreters and some others who work in the field but who have not received any advanced training. None have yet undergone the extensive training of spoken language interpreters. Until recently there were no incentives to take this training. In the last five years a career development structure has begun to be apparent. The profession of interpreting is taking root.

In carrying out an interpreting task with deaf and hearing people, the interpreter performs all the same tasks as a spoken language interpreter. The message received from the speaker is understood and relayed in signed form to the deaf viewers. When the deaf viewer wishes to contribute the reverse process occurs - sign language structure in the message is understood and relayed in English speech. The cognitive elements of this task are immense and the need for extensive knowledge of both languages is obvious. To reach this stage of knowledge, interpreters need a great deal of training. Such training can be offered properly only in a full-time framework.

Since 1987, the University of Bristol has offered training for interpreters. Only with the development of this Nuffield-funded project has it been possible to provide a full-time course.

### **1.3 Working with an Agency**

On the basis of the research carried out prior to the project, it became clear that there was a need to have a central location from which interpreters might work. This would offer ease of contact for outside agencies and for deaf people and would be a source of support for the interpreters. It can be envisaged that, as with spoken language interpreting agencies, only some of the staff are full-time interpreters. On this model, the Agency receives bookings or contracts. It issues details, arranges fees and carries out all the administration.

Agencies should in addition offer in-service training to the interpreters. It is this element which is most likely to link the training centre and the agency, in that interpreters can be offered follow-up training while they work in the field.

### **1.4 Preliminary Research**

In the initial phase (1990-1991) funded by internal grant from The University of Bristol, a survey was conducted among hearing and deaf users of interpreters in Avon and Gloucester, and with two organisations, which offered some interpreter services. The aim of the survey was to establish the pattern of provision and to determine priorities for provision in the future. This information was obtained by telephone and by face-to-face interview.

The agencies that were contacted were:

- Social services (Area Social Services Offices, social workers for the deaf, hospital social workers, health centre social workers).
- Probation Service (secondary school teachers, FE tutors)
- Legal services (criminal and civil courts, crown prosecution service police, firm of solicitors).
- Health services ( general hospitals, mental health hospitals, hospitals for those with learning difficulties)
- Employment Services (unemployment benefit office, social security office).
- Centres for the Deaf.

The picture was one of seeming co-ordination. Under the surface however, was a lack of system and structure. If deaf people succeeded in having interpreters for their needs and legitimate intentions, it was usually because they themselves had independently found someone to act as an interpreter. A number of problems were discovered:

- The deaf person had no guarantee of confidentiality
- Skills in sign language were not the same as interpreting skills
- People employed by interpreting services were not available to interpret
- The interpreter's linguistic and cognitive skills were limited in both languages
- The interpreter lacked necessary knowledge as to how the agency operated
- Conflict of roles when e.g. social workers acted as interpreters
- Deaf people themselves did not know how to use interpreters.

On contacting various organisations, we found that some had only a few names of interpreters on their list or even had just one who was usually overburdened by requests for interpreting. Others said that no deaf person had ever contacted them for services.

One of the key questions for interpreting service was payment. Some organisations thought it would be easy to obtain funding for interpreters without even having enough experience of trying to do so. Others had to negotiate the budget. Often there were grey areas concerning the application of the budget, e.g. interpreting for job interviews were easy to obtain but not for on- the- job training, or even for job evaluation and appraisal meetings.

Also there were times that it would have been better for the interpreter to meet the deaf person before the appointment for briefing but there was never funding for such needs. Another problem we found was that often if a deaf person brought an interpreter along with him/her there was no funding available for that event.

The situation for interpreting services began to improve as awareness of deafness improved. However, a major development - a national report on the provision of interpreting services (HACS Report) - was unfortunately undermined by being launched on the day when the Prime Minister announced the 1995 General Election. Although there was comparatively little political impact, there has been action by the service organisations. There has also been a revision of the support systems for work. Deaf people may now claim personal helper allowances as well as equipment, through a scheme called Access to Work, which is operated by the Department of Employment. When this is coupled with the allowances offered to deaf students in Higher Education, there is now considerably more funding available to support the provision of interpreters than ever before. This was timely and has had a great impact on the purchase of services although on its own it has not led to any increase in funding for training and there has been a net reduction in service providers. Reflection on these changes should be of great value in our study of the training and provision initiatives in terms of the user satisfaction.

### **1.5 The Proposal**

On the basis of the knowledge of the deaf community and the research on community needs and services offered, the proposal was presented to the Nuffield Foundation that an interpreter training course be set up with a direct link to an agency. This would allow the trained interpreters to work within the agency and to provide the service to deaf people which would be evaluated. Funding for three phases was envisaged:

- 1991-3: Course design, for a two year programme, with two groups of students entering the programme in overlapping years
- 1992-5: The setting up of the Agency; employment of interpreters and provision of service
- 1993-5: Evaluation of the training programme and research on community effects

Each of these is explained in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2: The Training Programme

Although the University of Bristol had offered a part-time training programme from 1987, the task of mounting a full-time programme was considerably more complex. As well as specifying a rationale, approach and teaching content, it was necessary to establish a course framework and qualification. The qualifications offered to the groups of trainees were a Certificate in Social Sciences (Deaf Studies) for the first year of the programme and a Diploma in Social Sciences (Deaf Studies) for the second year. These were designed as modular courses with 24 modules to be completed over two years. In the second year four modules were allocated to the dissertation, which was to be carried out on a topic in interpreting. It was originally intended that trainees might join the course directly in the second year as they would have known expertise in sign language; however, although this was allowed in the first year of the programme, in subsequent years it was discontinued as it was felt that the core of linguistics and culture presented in the first year could not be omitted.

The focus in the first year was language and culture. This comprised modules of language teaching (BSL1 - BSL4), of linguistics (Sign Linguistics 1, 2 and Sociolinguistics), of deafness and community (Hearing and Deafness, Deaf People in Society, Education, Law and Social Services and finally Bilingualism). Although one interpreting module was introduced in the first year, the main interpreting programme was presented in the second year. This consisted of Processes of Interpreting, Consecutive Interpreting, Simultaneous Interpreting, Ethics and Advanced English. Subsequent experience has altered the second year to include sign language (BSL5 - BSL7) and there are now more placement opportunities for students in interpreting agencies.

The staffing of the course has evolved over the period since 1991 as the Deaf Studies Programme in general, has grown. There were initial problems in using part-time staff for interpreting sessions but this difficulty has gradually become less significant. Assessment of the modules are done by end-point assessment and by assignments carried out through personal study linked to the course materials. More recently course placements are being assessed.

Students were recruited through national deaf press and through television. The course is designed to take 12 interpreting trainees each year, but pressures on overall finance have meant that initially fewer were admitted and then latterly, as the course has altered to become mandatory through Local Education Authorities, more than 12 have been admitted.

## **2.1 Issues Arising**

### **2.1.1 University-Agency Links**

Discussion with the RNID had proved very fruitful throughout the early phases of the project. RNID staff had participated in the selection procedure for the trainees.

However, there coincidentally occurred a change in leadership of the RNID and an acute financial crisis. This immediately affected the appointment of the Agency co-ordinator and delayed the setting up of the agency by some 6 months. This had a knock-on effect in convincing the Local Authorities and Services that an investment in contracted interpreting services was the preferred option. The result was that the Centre was not able to call upon interpreting expertise at the agency for the whole of the first year. The original plan to link training and service has now been completely abandoned as the pressure of work on the agency and the need for on-site interpreting trainers, has meant that the University has created internally the posts it needs.

A second problem arose in the employment, which was planned for the trainees who completed the course. Because of the pressures above, there were fewer interpreting jobs available and the implementation of Equal Opportunities Policies by RNID - ie not to take graduates automatically, competition for the available posts became much greater. Trainees were not able to find employment with the local agency but had to look further afield even though these posts were often with RNID.

The outcome has been to lessen the direct impact on the local community and to make the research in the second phase more difficult to carry out in the sense that it should illustrate the changes which have occurred within the community. The Agency provision has gathered momentum and provides an increasing proportion of the region's interpreting. This allows the examination of the impact on the community of interpreting services but does not directly illustrate the efficacy of training course - agency links (which had been intended) nor the participation of trainees directly in the agency work by employment at the end of the course (which had also been intended) in the original proposal.

## **2.2 Reports and Views on the Interpreter Training**

A detailed report has been provided in the interim submission to Nuffield and only a summary is presented here. The details refer to the course as it was in 1993 and is meant to provide some insight for those who are engaged in new course developments for interpreters. The course has radically altered from this initial offering and it is considered that the critical comments below were of great importance in helping those developments.

### **2.2.1 Staff Views in 1993**

There were 8 teaching members of staff, 4 of whom were deaf. Views expressed were various and some of these views are reported below.

### **2.2.1.1 About the composition of students**

Tutors felt that students selected, should have had more skills at the start of the course. In the intakes to date, the skills available did not allow full benefit of the intended training to be obtained. Others thought that students should also have more extensive screening after the first year before going on to second year. One tutor felt that because of the wide mix of experience in the classes it was difficult to find a balance in content and level of difficulty. Most tutors agreed that it was rather difficult to give individual feedback to the numbers of students when faced with their individual video work.

### **2.2.1.2 About the course**

The students needed more practical lessons in the first year. Most tutors agreed that sign learning in class, is not effective without more contact with deaf people in the community out of class time. Tutors insisted that there was a need for more practice in simultaneous interpreting. Finally most tutors agreed that the course should be a three year course with 6 months placements after the 2nd year.

### ***2.2.1.3 About rooms, equipment and materials at the Centre***

It was acknowledged that rooms were always a problem but there was little the Centre could do about it. Also there was initially a lack of materials in the Centre on how to teach interpreting in practice. Tutors agreed with students that a larger budget for equipment was needed.

### ***2.2.1.4 About the Placements***

Tutors felt that placements arrangements had not been fully supervised. Students should have help with transport cost. It would have helped to have at least one full-time worker responsible for arranging placement for students.

## **2.2.2 Student Feedback**

Initial student comment indicated the difficulties of setting up a wholly new provision. Lack of resourcing and course alterations were primary factors which were identified as affecting their progress. Much of what was elicited has become the basis of an altered course which has been in operation since that time, 1993.

### ***2.2.2.1 About the information given before the course***

Students complained that the information they were given prior to the course differed from the final product, though it was agreed that their own goals may have been unrealistic. Those students who had problems in adjusting said that they should have been required to have

minimum levels of signing skills before joining. Others felt that they had too many promises that were not fulfilled during the course.

#### *2.2.2.2 About the teaching and tutorials*

Students said that there were not enough hours set aside to teach sign language. Some complained that teachers were weak on teaching skills. Others complained of lack of preparation and difficulties in arranging tutorials. The tutors were good but they were not being used to their full potential. Others noticed improvement in the second year and felt they had had a good responses from deaf staff.

#### *2.2.2.3 About the equipment and materials*

There was considerable frustration with the varying video equipment standards which meant that the students had to learn how to manipulate a range of differing machines. A complaint which is repeated throughout the University was that there were not enough multiple copies and that access to resource material was limited. A video library was needed with a person to operate it.

#### *2.2.2.4 About the balance between theory and practice*

Students felt that there was too much theory in the first year and not enough practice where the theory was applied.

#### *2.2.2.5 About various modules in the course*

Requests were made for more direct teaching by deaf tutors - the module “Deaf People in Society” being a case in point. Some claimed that Processes of Interpreting course was introduced too early, and that Linguistics course could have had more *sign* linguistics.

#### *2.2.2.6 About placements*

Most students wanted placements to be arranged during the first year with more support. Those who had visited deaf homes claimed that visits should have been better organised. Those who were placed in a factory found that deaf people could not talk to students while working. Many maintained that better placements would have helped to improve the signing.

#### *2.2.2.7 In general, suggestions for improvements*

Administrative changes, teaching plans and compatibility with external examinations - CACDP needed attention. Too many modules and too much of everything, yet, not enough time to cover it all was a common feeling. Requests were made for better support beyond the end of the course.

## 2.3 The Development in Perspective

There is no doubt that the first two years of the first full-time training course for the new field of sign interpreting were difficult ones. Without central funding for start-up costs, even the generous grant from Nuffield was insufficient to provide the range of services which staff and students desired. Learning was undoubtedly affected and a sense of frustration prevailed. However, much was achieved. New curricula had been established and new fields of study have been opened up. A new group of professionals are now working in the deaf community; a group of staff have refined the training and assessment procedures.

## 2.4 The Current Situation

The course funded originally by Nuffield grew firstly into a full-functioning undergraduate course with an option for a postgraduate diploma. A total of around 45 modules were offered and there was a recruitment of up to 20 interpreter trainees each year. A good deal of this has been supported by grants from the HORIZON programme in the EU and this has meant important cross-fertilisation with other countries. Space remained a problem at this stage of development and there were insufficient staff for all the student needs. Changes were made to the structure of the programme and it qualified for direct funding from the Higher Education Funding Council. In 1999, the provision was further upgraded and a full BSc (three years full-time programme) was created. The training programme has become more broadly based with courses in Social Policy and options in a wide range of external subjects. As a result the Deaf Studies programme has become more focused and the range of materials has improved. The first set of graduates from this programme were in July 2001.

### 2.4.1 Views of Staff and Students in 1995 in general

Thirteen from 14 second year interpreting course students provided feedback. Only 1 was male. The age distribution of the group was as follows: 4 (31%) were between 20-25 years of age, seven (54%) were between 26-30 and two (15%) were over 30.

#### *2.4.1.1 About information provided on arrival in the course*

All agreed that the information which they received matched the reality of the course at least partially; however, a number of expectations about the achievement of CACDP stage 3 were not realised:

Six (47%) were under the impression they would leave the course holding Stage 3 CACDP<sup>1</sup> certificate and would be a registered trainee but this had not been so.

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1 CACDP stage 3 level (and the new NVQ equivalent) is an independent assessment level of signing which allows students to be registered as trainee interpreters. The course team have negotiated the automatic accreditation of internal courses up to stage 3, but students must still take the stage 3 exam or its equivalent.

*"I had arrived with very large expectations i.e. at the end of the course, all students would have stage 3 CACDP and be ready to sit the interpreters register exam - This was really based on conversation prior to enrolment."*

*"... felt the prospectus leaflets were misleading. CACDP stage 3 is at the fore front which really is not the case. I think it's a bit of a carrot for applicant"*

Six (47%) commented on the general information

*"It wasn't that the information was incorrect, maybe it needs to be more detailed. It was really my expectations of the place and what the course entailed that differed."*

*"The general outline of the course was given, but I was not sure exactly what modules there were nor what levels of signing ability other students had".*

*"Would have liked to have more details about books before hand".*

One (8%) commented positively:

*"I felt each module and what each tutor expected was explained in full. This was appreciated."*

#### **2.4.1.2** *About the teaching and tutorials*

Six (47%) commented that teaching was good. 1 (8%) commented that there were not enough qualified teachers. All 13 (100%) said that either there was not enough tutorial time or that they would appreciate more positive feedback.

*"Teaching: not enough qualified tutors, Tutorials : few and not very constructive in terms of weak and strong areas and how to improve."*

*"Teaching was OK, tutorials -no! Far too few, feedback always negative (BSL) and no aims or clear guidelines given."*

*"Teaching was fine but not enough tutorials. In the tutorials we did have there wasn't enough positive feedback and ways of dealing with problem areas."*

This is a general problem across the University. The efficiency gains which have been demanded have often been at the expense of the resource to provide individual support to each student. The basic unit of resource in Universities is so eroded that it is difficult to see how this criticism of students (and staff) can be dealt with.

#### **2.4.1.3** *About the technical equipment and materials*

Nearly all felt that the equipment was not extensive enough, or not working efficiently. Again this is a general criticism across the University as resources and maintenance is cut.

*"Many times the equipment was not available or not set up at the language lab. During **lab** sessions we had to work on larger groups than practical because of lack of equipment."*

*“Cameras are constant necessity, which are not always available due to breaking down. A certain number of cameras should also be available especially near exam times due to practice requirements.”*

*“Much of the time the quality of material (video) was not very good. However the use of the language lab was much appreciated.”*

It is easy to see that the course was trying to expand at a time when there was severe restriction on resource at University level. Although in theory, Universities have been able to take increased numbers of students, the amount of resource has been declining. This has a disproportionate effect on new Centres such as this one. Not surprisingly, the students identified the areas of greatest problem.

#### *2.4.1.4 About homework and assignments*

Six (47%) commented that the homework and the assignments were just about right and link to the topic taught. Five said that sometimes the homework was far too much especially at Placement time, while at other times there was not enough homework.

One (8%) said that at times assignments were not given back on time and it had made re-sits for exams a problem with the extra work that was needed.

#### *2.4.1.5 About usefulness of the placements*

Six (47%) commented that the placement was very useful and they had learned a lot. They also had a chance to put into practice what they have learned. Four (31%) thought that the placement was arranged at the last minute and did not give student enough time to prepare. The remainder did not comment.

*“In terms of dealing with real life situations, control confidence, the experience was far more beneficial than class room work.”*

*“It gave me an insight into what was required in interpreting as well as being able to put the skills I had learnt into practical. Also there were a variety of different setting and situation to learn from and come back and discuss with the tutor.”*

*“Placements were arranged very late and we found the information got to us only a week or less before we were to go. This was quite nerve racking and arrangements for travel had to be made on the last minute which is more expensive.”*

There has been a considerable change in the way in which placements are arranged. They are built into the course timetable instead of added on to it as it was for the first cohort. There are now more agencies where students can go and a better network for their support on site. Inevitably, there are still problems in financing these placements.

#### **2.4.1.6** *About the balance between theory and practice*

Three (23%) thought the balance between theory and practice was just right. Two (15%) thought the balance was wrong and there was far too much theory and not enough practice. Seven (54%) would have welcomed a bit more practice. The other three (23%) made special comments about specific subjects where there should be some change.

#### **2.4.1.7** *About the atmosphere*

Seven people commented that the atmosphere was good and supportive, with staff approachable. One commented that the staff were not approachable and that they let their outside activities interfere with relationships within the Centre. Five commented that the spirit and atmosphere between students was great but not always so with tutors.

*“Within the student group the attitude was very good. Staff seemed to be under stress a lot of the time and some students had to chase them for support/help outside class time. I did not have a problem myself.”*

*“Easy going, I found the staff approachable at all times. I found good relationships were easy to establish as both staff and students would socialise together once a week.”*

This seems like success given the comments earlier about the extent of under-resourcing. Stress in staff throughout the University is at a very high level in teaching intensive departments and centres.

### **2.4.2 General Comments and Suggestions**

About half of the group felt that organisation should be better and that time-keeping of participants was not always perfect. Feedback recurred as a problem where not enough credit was given for positive attitude. Student peer group support was seen as very important. Many wanted more time on BSL classes.

*“Generally feedback to students about their performances/abilities was too negative. We need praise for our positive attitudes. Also constructive ways of improving should be suggested. BSL should not be whole day teaching. Students cannot operate well in the afternoon after a morning watching videos - maybe split to 2 half days? BSL teaching would benefit by bringing in more deaf visitors to the class room. This would help our exposure to different ways of signing, regional differences, etc.”*

There was general approval of the course as a whole though many felt it had been too pressured.

*“The course is very interesting. It would benefit from being spread over a larger period. 2 years, 5 days a week is too heavy. It does not allow time for personal study or any outside networking within the deaf community.”*

*"I have enjoyed my 2 years and looking back have learnt a lot. It was however an extremely stressful time; I never felt ready and confident about any exams as there wasn't enough time to digest the teaching before you're tested on it. Without the support of the group it would have been terrible."*

*"Generally I feel the course has been valuable but also I feel my confidence level has suffered badly in many ways. I now feel less competent than when I started though I know I am more experienced and knowledgeable now."*

*"In general I have enjoyed the course. I understand that a lot of the problems are due to lack of funding and resources. I have gained a lot and I feel fairly well prepared for working as an interpreter. I think there should have been some more information on working practices i.e. as a freelance worker."*

## 2.5 In Summary

There are clearly still a number of problems which the course has to deal with. The fact that this Report has provided a vehicle for this ongoing comparison is a much needed enhancement to the general feedback system. The comments of the students entering the course in 1993 compared favourably with those who entered two years earlier. There was improvement. The balance improved and there was general progress towards more practical and focused offerings. Much remained to be discovered about the learning of a language which is signed rather than spoken. A specific area for attention was an inevitably problematic situation where the signing tutor has to comment in sign about the student's progress, when the student has not yet mastered that language. Comments had to be brief and were very direct. The result was construed as overly critical. This was an important area where better, more accessible feedback systems are needed.

In comparison with the first survey, there were still problems with equipment, and tutorials. The atmosphere had certainly improved. The teaching had improved too. Yet it seemed there were still areas for development and funding was considered essential for future success.

Although it was clear that there had been problems, a major step had been taken and the framework for interpreter training was to endure. New collaboration with colleagues in Europe broadened the base and helped to set up parallel developments in other parts of the EU. This was a growing development and led to the creation of the Centre for Deaf Studies in Dublin and Training centres in Spain and Greece.

The Centre's courses were evaluated in 1996, 1997 and again in 1998. On each occasion, the outcomes were positive. There is significant improvement in the overall standards of the students and considerable progress in the organisation and delivery of the courses. The feedback presented above has been an important factor in stimulating that development.

## **Chapter 3: The Wessex Agency**

### **3.1 Background**

As part of a national plan to develop services for deaf people, the RNID proposed the setting up of a Communication Services Unit. This terminology came about as a result of the discussions which led to the HACs report (1995). It is significant in that it implies that the Unit caters for the needs of more than just deaf community members, but also for deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing people. The early stages of development were characterised by the need to convince service providers (or purchasers in the case of Health) that the hitherto unmet needs of deaf people were of some importance. This was slow task and was affected by the changing staffing of the RNID regional office. In the changing climate of contracts and sub-contracts of service, it was a strategy for development which ought to succeed and it has led to significant growth in interpreting services.

In the specific case of Avon, The Wessex Communication Support Unit was originally set up with Joint Finance money (Health and Social Services) - £22,000 for the first year (1992-1993) to provide 200 sessions of communication support for primarily health and social services settings. The aims of the service were broadly:

1. to provide a comprehensive service to meet individual needs
2. to provide a professional communication support service independent of direct management by the local authority
3. to provide a service, where possible, which is free of charge to deaf and hearing impaired people unless they are in receipt of money intended to be used in this way
4. to raise awareness amongst deaf and hearing impaired people of the role and benefits of independent and qualified communication support
5. to increase awareness, and to promote acceptance, within the hearing community of the value of the service to both hearing and deaf people and responsibility for its costs.

### **3.2 Initial Development**

The first contracted sessions were exhausted within the first nine months and a further 100 sessions were purchased at a cost of £8,000. In that first full year of funding, 267 sessions of support were delivered in primary and health care setting and 35 in social service settings, a combined total of 302. In addition, the Centre for the Deaf made an independent grant to the CSU of £2,500 per annum and 74 sessions were set against this funding, although clearly the grant did not cover the full cost. The reason for this was the Centre for the Deaf's and RNID's willingness not to deprive deaf people of an interpreting service when they had a justified request. At the outset many situations could/would not have been paid for, where funding is now established, e.g. job interviews, and there are still many situations where funding will not and cannot be guaranteed. Yet interpreting support was vital in order to demonstrate both the need and the value.

### 3.3 Progress April 1993 - March 1994

#### 3.3.1 Contracts

Within the health setting 212 sessions were delivered, involving a mixture of GPs and hospital settings. In addition to the delivery of service there was development work, but only because there were times when all available resources had to be concentrated on service delivery, because the consumer group (both deaf and hearing) was creating an awareness and more hearing users were recognising the justification for purchasing the service. Avon Social Services, used 23 sessions of communication support and the Centre for the Deaf had 29 sessions, again all involving sign language.

#### 3.3.2 Ad Hoc Sales

In addition to contracted services, there were bookings, which derived from specific needs. These were arranged on an ad hoc basis.

*Table 3.1: Recent Pattern of Ad Hoc Sales*

Year	Total	Meeting	Legal	Education/Training	Review/Interview	Other
1993	498	193	33	223	39	10

As we can see these were predominantly bookings to allow deaf people to attend meetings or to participate in training courses. A significant proportion of these sales were within the University of Bristol ADSI initiative, and the Centre for Deaf Studies. This is growing area of work as more deaf and hearing people are entering mainstream and specialist higher education facilities at the University of Bristol.

In addition to the high rate of communication support activity that takes place within Avon that is pre-purchased, the RNID has provided 57 sessions within the community, despite the fact that it was unable to find funding. A substantial number of these were for job interviews, DSS issues, and legal work for which it proved impossible to find funding, and this reflects the fact that although significant advances have been achieved, there is still much development that needs to take place, not just locally but nationally too.

It could be argued that, without that communication support in those 57 sessions, the possibility is that eventually there would have been impact on both health and social services demands. However, there is also a positive aspect in that these sessions ensure that more people use the service and become aware of its possibilities.

#### 3.3.3 Problems - Cancellation

In each period, there are a number of cancelled bookings. It would be difficult to quantify the number of queries received about the charges and costs of providing an interpreter which may

be perceived by the enquirer as an inability to provide a service but on which the detail is not specific enough for a firm booking.

In total there is evidence of 92 bookings in the period, which were cancelled. Of these, 52 were cancelled by the users, either because their appointment/meeting was cancelled, or because no deaf people were participating, or because funding could not be found. (This latter is quite often true of block bookings) Of the 40 cancelled or failed by the Unit (usually because notice had been short and it was impossible to find an interpreter) 9 of these were against the contracts already mentioned.

### 3.4 Agency Update

In order to bring the Agency developments into focus, more up to date information was sought which would provide the backdrop to the provision of interpreting services. In order to achieve this, the researcher went to Wessex twice and had extended discussions with the manager.

#### 3.4.1 The Agency at the end of this period

The Agency, set up in January 1992, caters for interpreting needs within the Wessex Area - loosely interpreted to include Somerset and Avon. The Agency caters for deaf people who require BSL interpretation as well as HOH people who require, HI-LINC<sup>2</sup> and lip-speakers. When the Unit was set up by the RNID, it was intended that the Unit would become self supporting and yet, that services for deaf people would be free. By 1994, Wessex had 4 full-time County interpreters, two Senior Interpreters (one to be appointed), one manager + 1.5 coordinators.

#### 3.4.2 Agency Aims

- To promote equal access for all deaf people
- To provide interpreting services that is:

Professional

Independent - it is run by the RNID, which is the largest voluntary organisation in the UK promoting the interest of deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and deaf-blind people.

Confidential - The service promises that nothing said or signed in an interpreting situation will be revealed outside.

Comprehensive - communication support service that uses sign language interpreters, lip-speakers, note-takers, technical support and special interpreters to deaf blind people.

Free for deaf people themselves

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<sup>2</sup> This is a computer note-taking system which was developed in Bristol.

### 3.4.3 Booking procedure

A deaf person wishing to book an interpreter can call using fax, Minicom, or *Type-Talk* (the BT supported relay service for Minicom users) to request an interpreter for an assignment and to specify personal preference; there is then a wait until the Agency calls back confirming the booking or indicating that it has not been possible to find an interpreter. During the period between first request and confirmation, the Agency has to call around the interpreters on its list to match interpreter and assignment. The Agency have a booking fee; however this is usually invisible to the deaf users as it is paid by the Agency itself or by the organisation who wish to use the interpreter. Where an organisation has arranged a contract with Wessex, there is priority for the booking of interpreters, even though this may not be apparent to the deaf user.

Once an interpreter is located it is not automatic that a booking is confirmed. Only 5% of the interpreters would say *yes* to any assignment. Most interpreters are trained to ask questions such as, *what is the topic?, the location? who is it needed for? how long for? is there a video in use?* and other questions. They would also refuse to take some assignments if they felt it was at a level or on a topic for which they felt unqualified.

After the booking is confirmed, the form is transferred to a file containing completed assignments which are due for payments. If the application was not successful it then moves to the file of *cancellation*.

## 3.5 Procedures of the Agency

In this section, we have set out the procedures, which have developed in the acceptance of bookings and the monitoring of service. These are subject to change and modification over time and so it must be realised that this is a snapshot rather than a blue print for interpreting services. Many aspects reflect the policies of RNID generally. However, we believe the points made are typical of the components and practices in Agency work.

### 3.5.1 Questions asked when booking is made

In order to clarify the work described to us, we have tabulated the responses to specific questions and the issues which were raised in discussion.

Table 3.2 Initial Booking

Question Asked or Notes made	Response or entry in files
Name of user(s)	Mr XXXXXX
Date, time and venue of the assignment	22.2.96, 10.00 a.m. at the Bristol Deaf Club
What is the nature of the assignment?	Social services meeting, or visit to the dentist
How many deaf and hearing are expected?	One deaf in a group of hearing, conference audience ...
Duration of assignment	One hour, 3 hours ..
Is there a request for a specific interpreter?	Preference may depend on style, gender or familiarity

Where the proposed booking is not covered by a contract, the procedure is termed ad hoc. In this case further information has to be obtained e.g. address for invoice.

### 3.5.2 Finding the right interpreter

Where there has been a specific name requested, the Agency checks for availability. Where there has been no specific request, or where the first choice is unavailable, the Agency has to call around. The interpreter must be qualified (95% of the assignments use full-time staff interpreters who have at least stage 3). Where there are special interests or where the interpreter has further training, this is matched to the users' needs wherever possible.

### 3.5.3 Informing the client

Following the matching of interpreter and assignment, there have to be further dealings with the user or the person who has booked on behalf of the user. Table 3.3 in the next page illustrate the process of booking.

Table 3.3: Procedures in confirming the booking

Elapsed Time	The time between initial contact and confirmation can be one day to 2 weeks. Where no interpreter is found, this is reported right away to client.
The method of contact	Mostly by telephone. If a deaf person leaves an address, then first confirmation in writing. If the booking is through Social Services or other Institution, this contact is asked to inform deaf user. The rule is always to notify the contact who has made the booking.
Where changes are made	As above
Informing of unsuccessful booking	Sometimes the Agency knows beforehand when certain days may be problematic. i.e. too many bookings were already requested for that day. If so, the person booking will be told and the Agency will try for 48 hours. If there is no success, the contact is notified. The rule is to provide as much notice as possible of lack of success.
Access to information held	Every new member of staff is informed about confidentiality. Working guides are available together with new rules of confidentiality. No outsider is allowed to look into files of booking forms.

### 3.5.4: The Contracting System and How it Works

A great deal of the work of the Agency is based on contracts with major institutions or Authorities (Table 3.4 below). These contracts are vital to the working of the Agency, its planning and its quality control.

Table 3.4: Understanding the Contracting System and Staff Support

The contractors	Contracts are made with Local Authority (Social Services) Health Authorities (doctors and hospitals) and now also with the University of Bristol. The contract enables the Agency to hire an interpreter. When contractors make a booking, they are given priority. Only if that interpreter (working under contract) has space in his/her timetable will Ad Hoc sales be accepted. At the beginning, contractors provided all the money in advance, but now most use systems designed to give an ongoing more accurate estimate of what will be used.
Benefit for contractors	There is a guaranteed service Their staff do not waste time looking for an interpreter. They show their deaf constituents that they are meeting their needs They can show that they are honouring the Citizen's Charter
Benefit for Agency	Can employ staff Can guarantee service, and quality Unit can look after the costing. Can still offer Ad Hoc sales, Can provide training
Monitoring own staff	This is provided by the Senior Staff Interpreter. Field interpreters develop their skills and give better service as a result. Often Wessex use an external monitor to go with the interpreter on assignment. The Monitor gives feedback. The RNID has an appraisal system every year, which applies to all staff. This is not yet implemented fully.
In-service training	The training is mainly focused on sign language. RNID run the courses. In 1994, 48 people took part in the training. For interpreters it is a requirement and staff attend until they pass.
Supervision	Wessex try to give a formal supervision session to all every 6 weeks. Senior Interpreters provide supervision to interpreters while the Manager supervises senior interpreters and other members of staff.
Employment guideline	The RNID have an Employment Guideline as well as Equal Opportunity Guidelines in two volumes covering all aspect of employment.
Confidentiality	Every member of staff is informed about confidentiality procedure at Wessex. Even when contractors come in to check the figures they are aware that they are bound by confidentiality. At the time of data collection, no complaint had been made over this issue.

### 3.5.5 Future plans

The Agency has also forward plans which are designed to improve the services in the longer term.

Table 3.5: Plans and Developments

Planned developments	RNID is hoping to increase service to all people with hearing loss not just sign language users. Currently 95% of the service is delivered to sign language users. This focus needs to be shifted. Wessex feels that many deaf do not use the service while there are many people who are hearing impaired and have other needs who would appreciate the service of lip speakers, note takers or HI-LINC.
Funding for future	It is hoped that more contracts from Health Trusts and Local Authorities will be forthcoming.

Publicity	There is a leaflet which explains how to book an interpreter. It aims at contractors or Ad Hoc sales. A new booklet for deaf people is being prepared. Also there is a new poster and other materials explaining the work of Wessex. There have been meetings and awareness training for deaf users in Avon, Somerset and Dorset.
Awareness training	There are two awareness trainers. RNID has a small unit that is responsible for Deaf Awareness training. And this can be booked at cost for hearing/deaf.

### 3.6: Summary Statistics

The growth of the Agency can be seen most clearly in the statistics which have been compiled over the last 4 years.

Table 3.6: Growth in the Agency

	1991-2	1992-3	1993-4	1994-5	1995-6
No. of Staff	2	5	6.5	8	8
Staff interpreters	0	2	3+1	4+1	4+1
Freelance	15	12	13	14	14
Contracts	1	3	5	7	7
Assignments	500	1000	1600	2594	~3000
Requests	?	~1050	1750	2773	?

### 3.7 General issues comments and views

#### 3.7.1 Areas of success

The Agency has grown quickly from very small beginnings. There has been a steep curve of learning and the staff at Wessex feel much has been achieved.

- The fact that Deaf people are beginning to use the Wessex Unit effectively
- The freephone number is available
- There is a considerable increase in the number of request for interpreters
- Few bookings have to be turned away
- Experience of funding arrangements is improving all the time
- Each staff interpreter has a mobile phone. Before they had pagers but that was not so effective so now each has a mobile phone. Also they leave messages on each other answer phone.
- There is a 24 hour freephone available with Voice and Minicom. The message enables one to leave request for interpreters and for urgent or emergency there is a further phone number given. People can use an emergency interpreter. So far there are 4-5 cases of emergency each month and only one of those fails to get interpreter.

### **3.7.2 Areas of failures or weaknesses and concern**

At the same time there are aspects of the work, which will require further attention.

- Not enough interpreters available to cover the need
- The failure (2%) to meet booking requests
- Not enough people to raise awareness among deaf people
- The fact that there are never enough staff
- The need for more money and people for promotion work
- Too many last minute bookings; too many changes in booking, cancellation, postponed appointments
- The inadequate cover within the Legal and Justice system with too few qualified people and very little funding

### **3.8 Conclusion**

The Wessex Agency has come a long way in a short time, in a period of great change in the funding system for Local Authorities and Health Trusts. At the same time, it has had to work with a newly trained group of interpreters and the stresses of a new and emerging profession. Deaf people, grown used to the lack of interpreters and limited access, have been slow to take up the service and are still insufficiently aware of the work of the interpreter and the potential for growth which it represents. Nevertheless the outcomes have been positive and the system of agency provision is improving all the time.

## **Chapter 4: The Interpreters**

The purpose of the research was to change the community - at least insofar as to widen the opportunities for growth and development. To do this, there was to be training programme and a provision of interpreters. The vision was of training leading directly to employment in the region. In the event, the financing of the services in the region was slower to develop than was envisaged. As a result only one of the initial cohort of students settled to work within the region. Although the others found work in interpreting, it was in other areas of the UK. This outcome was not planned and although an undertaking had been made by the trainees to stay in the region, it was not possible to enforce this, as there were not enough full-time jobs to support them. The training also of the two relevant cohorts during the first period of the course was incomplete in terms of reaching the target of full qualification by the end of two years (see chapter 2).

However, the second and third components of the project could be attained - the examination of the development of the Agency (chapter 3) and the effect which the service has had on the community. It is the second of these, which is addressed in the next three chapters as seen through the eyes of the interpreters, deaf users and deaf people who have not been users.

### **4.1 Sign Language Interpreters**

Sign language interpreters are professionals who have undergone a period of training and who have passed examinations, to allow them to interpret messages in one language into a second language, faithfully and accurately, observing an agreed code of conduct. Interpreting involves the transfer of meaning from one message to another for the benefit of user(s) who do not share a language. This transfer of meaning can be consecutive (ie after the originator has stopped talking) or simultaneous (the interpreter relays the message while the first message is continuing). Interpreting is highly stressful and should be carried out for only short periods of time before rest breaks. Sign language interpreters are interpreters who work between spoken and signed languages - across modalities. Unlike spoken language interpreters, sign language interpreters are always visible to the audience. As a new profession and since sign language is an indigenous language (ie it belongs to the UK), interpreters work within a country and often with people who have never met an interpreter before. This raises many issues of behaviour and conditions over which the interpreter has little control. Such conditions are inherently problematic, meaning that the interpreter's working conditions vary greatly from one assignment to another. The extent to which training prepares an interpreter for this circumstance is a part of the discussion below.

### **4.2 The Study**

Although the Agency is the body, which provide the service, it is the interpreters who deliver the service, they are the ones who can shift opinion of deaf people from positive to negative or vice versa. Their satisfaction from the working relationship from the aspects of work, and the

training they had will determine their quality of service and in turn the satisfaction of deaf users.

Interviews were carried out with interpreters, deaf users and deaf people who did not use the Agency. These were completed between October 1994 and March 1995. The interviews covered a wide range of topics concerning the practices of interpreting.

### **4.3 The Participants**

All the interpreters who had worked for the Wessex Agency in the previous 6 months were contacted through the Agency. They were asked to participate in an interview, which would be of value in monitoring and evaluating the services to deaf people and the effectiveness of the Agency itself.

Twenty questionnaires were sent to interpreters. Eighteen replied with the first short questionnaire. Three candidates changed their mind about being interviewed - in the end only 15 interviews were carried out. Of the initial returns, one male interpreter had only a stage 2 certificate, and was not working as an interpreter. Another male interpreter was actually a Chaplain who interpreted only occasionally. The characteristics of the 18 interpreters were as follows,

- 3 males (17%), 15 females (83%)
- 5 (28%) were 21-30 years of age
- 8 (44%) were 31-40 years of age
- 4 (22%) were 41-50 years of age
- 1 (6%) was 51-60 years of age

Further details obtained from the questionnaires are set out below.

### **4.4 The Procedure**

As mentioned above, Wessex sent the first questionnaire to all interpreters and when completed and when they gave their wish to participate in such an interview, the researcher contacted them and carried out the interview. However some of the interpreters could not be reached and the questionnaire was sent by post for completion.

In all 20 questionnaires were sent, 18 were completed; 3 dropped out because of personal reasons. Eight interpreters were interviewed and 7 questionnaires were returned by post. To ensure we had interpreters co-operation in this research and at the same time to allow them feel safe by making comments about the service they give, about the Agency (their employer) as well as about the access to the information they give (confidentiality), we had to assure them of confidentiality. The Wessex Agency circulated among them a basic questionnaire (Appendix A2.1). They were requested to complete it, send it back and agree to take part in the interview. The letters written by the University were sent from the Wessex Agency.

## 4.5 The Results

### 4.5.1 Postal questionnaire - preliminary

Eighteen interpreters responded to the first questionnaire. Their responses will be analysed separately at this stage as they do provide a good guide to the range of interpreters who have been working in the region during the period of the study.

### 4.5.2 Characteristics

Fifteen of the respondents were female. Two-thirds were between the ages of 31 and 50 years.

Twelve (67%) had had no deaf members in the family while 6 (33%) had one or more deaf relative. Eight (43%) had not learned to sign until after the age of 20 years and most (12) had learned from classes rather in interaction as a child. This pattern is quite different from the sign interpreters of the past. It is also quite different from the spoken language interpreting situation. Even where there are people who have no relatives in their second language, almost all will have studied the language while still at school and most will have taken it at University. By the time they are in their early twenties, they will have lived in the country of their second language. The task of sign language learning after the age of 20 years is obviously a huge one given the lack of contact most people have with native users of the language.

In terms of the extent of training, half claimed to have had less than 200 hours of training. Most training seemed to have been part-time (only one had been full-time) with the largest group (5) having been trained by RNID itself. Three had been trained at the University of Bristol. Reactions to the success of the courses were mostly positive, though not overwhelmingly so.

Only one third had reached registered interpreter status, although 15 (83%) had stage 3 CACDP certificates, while 3 did not reply. Half of the group worked as freelance interpreters and two-thirds worked more than 20 hours per week in interpreting. Four (22%) had other training in one different specialised area, i.e. child abuse, Legal. One had other areas of training, 2 (11%) had training in 3 different topics. Another 2 (11%) had training in 4 topics and only two (11%) had training in more than 4 topics. Seven (39%) did not have any other training. On average they spent between 1- 50 hours on each topics.

When we asked if they were employed as interpreters or were freelance interpreters, 9 (50%) said they were freelance interpreters, 8 (44%) were employed full time as interpreters, 1 did not reply.

**Interpreting:** They were asked about the last week of interpreting. Four (22%) spent less than 10 hours on interpreting, 1 (6%) spent less than 20 hours but more than 10. Eight (44%) spent more than 20 hours on interpreting but less than 30 hours. Only 4 spent more than 30 hours on interpreting. One did not reply.

**Preparation:** Two (11%) spent more than 1 hour on preparation. Six (33%) spent more than 2 hours, 1 (6%) spent more than 5 hours, 9 (50%) did not reply.

**Travelling:** Two (13%) spent less than 5 hours on travelling, 9 (50%) spent less than 10 hours on travelling. Only 2 (13%) said they spent around 20 hours a week on travel. 4 (24%) did not reply.

**Administration:** Two people (11%) spent 2 hours a week on administration while 2 (11%) spent 4 hours, 1 (6%) spent more than 4 hours, 4 (22%) spent 5 hours on administration. Three (17%) spent more than 8 hours while 6 (33%) did not reply.

We then asked for comments on performances and feedback.

#### 4.6 Open ended questions

This section looked into the extra comments made by the interpreters (n=18). (Because of the small number of interpreters in the area, and in order to maintain confidentiality we did not mention sex or age of the people who produced the quotes given in this section).

##### 4.6.1 Entry qualifications

When asked about the entry requirements for the training and profession, six did not reply, 9 needed stage 3 on *top of what they had studied*.

Two needed to be Registered Trainee, one needed A-level English, two needed Interview.

Table 4.1 Entry Qualifications

	Replied	Stage 3	Registered Trainee	A level English	Interview
yes	12	12	2	1	2

##### 4.6.2 Other special training

When asked about the training received in addition to interpreter training there was a wide range of responses (Table 4.2). Most common was additional training in the Law.

Table 4.2 Types of Training Received

Topic	Replied	Child abuse	Legal	Medical	Theatre	Linguistic	Deaf blind	Gay vocabulary	Police	English-BSL/BSL - English	Music
Yes	13	4	7	4	1	1	2	1	1	3	1

##### 4.6.3 Preferred training

When asked about the training which they would like to have, 3 wished they had Legal training, 3 said Medical, 1 wished she had platform interpreting training, 3 wished they had more work on English to sign, 4 wished they had voice over training, 2 wished for sign production, 1

needed more fingerspelling. Two main reasons for not taking those extra courses were time and money.

Because of the small number of interpreters available, interpreters often find themselves overworked with more booking than they could cope with and therefore have no time or energy to take further training.

#### **4.6.4 Other Courses Preferred**

One said she wished to have a time management course, 3 wanted general interpreting courses, one wanted International signing skills and one wanted religious interpreting.

#### **4.6.5 Questions about Agencies**

Of the group, 15 worked for the Wessex Agency, 1 worked for CACDP, 4 worked for the BDA, 2 worked for DRT, 5 worked for various other agencies, 7 worked for RNID elsewhere.

#### **4.6.6 Improvements to Wessex services**

Four people said that Wessex needed better information when first contact was made. Other points were publicity, administration and booking procedure

#### **4.6.7 First questionnaire**

The following section contains direct quotes from interpreters in regard to the whole procedure for interpreting within the agency.

##### **4.6.7.1** *Qualification and level of interpreting*

*“Because of my limited signing skills I have only undertaken assignments where the service user has been aware that I am only at stage 2 and they are willing to accept this”.*

*“Having passed my stage 3 & registered 18 months ago I have been asked to interpret in situations I do not feel sufficiently trained to undertake”.*

Because of the short supply of interpreters and the demands, interpreters often leave training immediately to go into interpreting in the field. Because of the responsibility and the stress involved, some do feel it is too much of a task.

##### **4.6.7.2** *About the Wessex Agency*

*“Wessex is far too economically motivated, The quality they provide includes insufficient inadequate HAC support to the clients need, users, interpreters and themselves. They need to be more discerning... & accept that it is not necessarily in everyone's best interest to provide ‘cobbled together’ service”.*

When Wessex received bookings, they charged additionally, travel expenses, and a booking fee. This is to cover administration. This was designed to cover time spent trying to find the right interpreter, phone calls made, letters sent, etc. Some interpreters felt it was better if they could be booked individually, not via an Agency.

#### **4.6.7.3 About confidentiality**

*“With regard to private and confidential assignment, interpreters should have access to this information prior to the assignment.”*

Because of the ethics and ‘Code of Practice’ interpreters are not given the in-depth detail of each assignment. Wessex may not have it anyway. At times they felt the situation was too stressful and that they were not prepared. Yet the client did not wish anyone to know and did not expect the interpreter to come prepared.

### **4.7 The interviews**

#### **4.7.1 Monitoring own performance**

In monitoring, eight people said they used a video recorder of themselves signing to determine performance. Two asked friends for opinions and 5 asked deaf users to comment. Three said they watched deaf users' reaction as a way to find out how good or bad they were. Two relied on written feedback. Four said they relied on another interpreter's comments.

#### **4.7.2 Improving performance**

Nine said that they recognised their weaknesses and acted upon them eg

*“It will enable me to recognise my weak areas.”*

*“If specific feedback is given it helps me to focus on a specific aspect”*

*“I learn from experience, I realised I need to do more research before, I need more preparation.”*

*“If an assignment felt really difficult I look at ways of improving the situation for next time and build on what I learnt from each assignment.”*

#### **4.7.3 Interpreting exercises used**

Four said they watch signers and used voice over. Five said they use video, 3 said they watch TV and media and interpreting. One said she did course work, 1 said she signed songs, 3 said they rely on sessions with other interpreter and one said she has no time to do so.

*“I translate, script stories, reading, interpret songs, audio tapes & video production. After assignments, I discuss choice of signing etc., with another person, deaf or hearing.”*

#### 4.7.4 Practical exercises which people said they used

Eight said they read a lot and one said she recorded herself and monitored it. Three usually did crosswords, 3 were studying English, 2 used a dictionary, 2 listened to Radio and TV and one said she played scrabble!

*"I record something, play it back then listen again trying to find one word to cover three words, etc."*

*"I read quite a bit"*

*"I read newspaper from start to finish and have a strange fascination in reading dictionaries and books about the English language - It's true I'm weird."*

*"I Listen to Radio 4 on my long journeys to and from work, read newspapers when possible"*

#### 4.7.5 Appraisal by fellow interpreters

Four people said yes, they would like to be appraised as much as possible, 1 said monthly, others commented on the effect of appraisal or gave conditions to the process.

*"Only if that interpreter is of a higher standard - quarterly"*

*"Only if their opinion considered and valued."*

*"The interpreter who does the appraising should be more qualified and experienced. Perhaps 2 or 3 times a year."*

*"Yes, as often as possible, fellow interpreters have so much knowledge that we should all be sharing as long as everyone feels safe and comfortable about it."*

Most interpreters agreed that monitoring and advice from colleagues and interpreters was valid and important. Some interpreters felt uncomfortable when signing with other interpreters around, watching their performances as if they are under scrutiny. But if the *right* interpreter was present, comments were valued.

#### 4.7.6 Re-taking register exams

Ten thought interpreters should re-take the exams while 3 disagreed. Varying periods were given with the most common, 5 years being suggested by 7 people.

*"To maintain a high standard - every 5 years"*

*"To remain professional but if we do have to re-take exams we should be given equal status to spoken language interpreters."*

At present, sign language interpreters are not given the same status as translators. Perhaps it is because sign Language itself is not yet recognised by the Government.

*"No, not re-sit another exam , maybe another system could be devised to check an interpreters skills after a set period of time."*

*“Not re-take, but show they have continued their training & development in order to maintain their license.”*

#### **4.7.7 Agency monitoring of performances**

Seven said that the agency should monitor assignments or performances. Four said that the Agency should use other interpreters to listen to comment from deaf users. Two said the Agency should provide training.

*“Previously arranging with interpreters and by setting the assignment - both agreeing.”*

*“By accompanying them on assignment, but also by providing training opportunities.”*

*“I work for agencies RNID Devon & Cornwall, However at the moment the monitoring is insufficient at times non existent, so I welcome that.”*

*“One year interpreting alongside another interpreter, more input in training, more support from other interpreters.”*

*“Senior interpreter should monitor performances on a regular basis.”*

At present, when interpreters go on assignments, they were alone, unless the assignment is a long one and 2 or more interpreters were booked. But generally interpreters are on assignment by themselves. No one knows whether they carry out the interpreting task as they should, whether they follow the Code of Practice, if they were dressed appropriately, etc. However if the interpreter turned up at an assignment followed by a Monitor, whether a deaf supervisor or a fellow interpreter, the deaf participant / client might feel his privacy was invaded. It was a ‘Catch 22’ situation.

#### **4.7.8 Comments from the Hearing users of interpreting service**

Two thought comments should come via the agency and 5 said general comments should be after the assignment. Three said hearing people should not comment.

*“Hearing people should not be asked to comments on content- only on the overall impact.”*

*“Not interested in their comments”*

Hearing users are usually Doctors, Solicitors, teachers, etc. They have no sign language skills to know whether the interpreter conveys the message accurately to the deaf person or not. If we were to approach hearing users to obtain their comments, they felt that they may lose the trust of the deaf person as he/she may think they were spying or “being nosy”. It is a very sensitive area.

#### **4.7.9 Deaf comments on performances**

Most thought deaf comments should be through the Agency after the event.

*“Deaf people should only comment on overall impact or impression”*

Interpreters did not welcome comments from deaf users here, yet in another section there was a demand for deaf feedback in sign language.

#### 4.7.10 Explanations for these circumstances

There were explanations for the diversity of response.

*“A hearing user may not necessarily have the same view as the deaf user on the performances.”*

*“Because the deaf might think I’m talking behind their back as they will not be involved, they will lose trust in interpreter.”*

*“Because hearing comments usually never happened. my prime concern is deaf people, hearing who have criticism should contact the agency”.*

*“Neither deaf nor hearing can provide comments on my interpreting skills (unless they are interpreters) although comments are still useful on voice or signing ability, It is also impossible for a deaf or hearing person to really assess you while they are involved with the situation. Ideally, you would need an extra deaf or hearing person to join the interpreting situation specially to comment and give feedback.”*

#### 4.7.11 Increases in type of work over the next 6 months?

Three said they would increase conference and platform work. Others mentioned lip speaking, court work, mental health and education.

#### 4.7.12 Decrease in type of work in the next 6 months

One said less education and medical education, one said she will reduce her interpreting commitments for meetings

*“Agency jobs, 1/2 day jobs”*

*“All as I am not an interpreter only a Chaplain.”*

#### 4.7.13 Clarification of meetings before the assignment?

One mentioned the need to know about the equipment to be used i.e. Video, Over Head Projector, etc. Four mentioned the need to discuss jargon and terminology, while 7 said they wished to discuss the language and level of signing i.e. BSL, SSE. Nine wanted to discuss the role of the interpreter. Five were concerned about specific content/equipment. Four said they needed to discuss breaks during the assignments and 3 mentioned content of assignment. Ten said they needed to discuss arrangements like voice over.

*“Ask for any information, i.e. jargon, names, etc. Breaks! How to use an interpreter e.g. lighting, OHP + flip chart rules. Interpreter seating, explain “Only one brain” one voice etc. talk at normal speed, eye contact with deaf person.”*

*“Who deals with difficult situation if it arises any particular help service user requires. That service user is able to relate and feels happy with the interpreter.”*

*“The communication style, the assignment’s content, who will do the introduction, the time, seat, and breaks if necessary”.*

Often if things are not discussed and clarified before hand, the deaf user might not be able to understand the interpreter, or would be annoyed at the fact that interpreter took break every 20 minutes. Also a deaf user might have different expectation of the interpreter; he/she might expect the interpreter to act as a social worker to advise and intervene. Clarification seems to be a vital pre-requisite.

#### 4.7.14 Agency and the process of interpreting

One interpreter said that the Agency needed better advertisement to obtain the suitable interpreter. Three said the Agency needed to obtain better information when a booking was made. Other points were better liaison between Agency and interpreters, better and secured funding, easier booking.

*“By providing a quality service”*

*“By making it easier for deaf people to get an interpreter.”*

#### 4.7.15 Recent improvements arising from active interpreting

Nine people replied with different stories.

*“More access for deaf people to public events etc. + Awareness by hearing people”*

*“A student gaining access to adult education classes.”*

*“An interview of discipline became informative and a misunderstanding was cleared up.”*

This referred to situations where in the past, the deaf person may be wrongly charged with a failing. The presence of an interpreter helps to solve this problem.

*“Relay interpreting used in a mental health setting and with users with learning difficulties”.*

*“Contract with Social Services Agreement on Code of practice,”*

*“Interpreter (not Wessex) helped to change attitudes of organisations/ companies/ colleges for the better. Interpreters ensured that people would be aware that not only deaf people need interpreters, hearing need them too.”*

*“HAC’s (Human Aid to Communication) report recommendation dealt with the structure for registered trainee interpreters. CACDP (Council of the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People) directory, less control of the freelance market has improved the working environment for the SLIS (Sign Language Interpreting Service)”*

*“Not recent, but employer knew nothing about deaf culture or BSL, Deaf person knew nothing about sign linguistics but was able to explain about himself which made employer aware of cultural differences. Without the interpreter these differences would not be clarified. The employee was able to keep his job”.*

*“By using interpreters, people gain more awareness of the deaf community in general. There are many examples but in particular in the field of employment, helped by PACT and Government funding. I have seen large and small companies become more aware of the needs of their employees and be more positive towards job applications by deaf people”.*

#### **4.7.16 Personal allowances to pay for interpreters**

*“Yes, I am aware of many deaf people not gaining access to information, employment, etc. Due to the lack of funds to pay for interpreters, deaf people need to feel they are 'on par'.”*

*“It maybe could make the deaf community aware of the service and what is available to them.”*

*“Yes! Choices create desire to know what is available, hence the standard has to rise. At the moment there are few choices. Also the Government would have to provide money for training interpreters.”*

*“No, this may will open the gates for ‘Cowboys’ signers to be used without any regulations body. The financial transactions may also be difficult to agree and complete on an individual basis.”*

*“I think this could mean deaf people would not go through an Agency and may be tempted to use unqualified people that would be less expensive”.*

*“Could improve choices of interpreters and the situations in which they are employed e.g. social settings, could however be very problematic initially in terms of education of users.”*

*“Because some people have greater needs which are vital to their life, and would need more than their allocation”.*

*“Well it seems to work OK in European countries i.e. NL, Denmark etc. But it would need a lot of consumer education. It would need to be very carefully thought out proposal.”*

*“Yes - perhaps deaf people will have choice (better) make own decisions about which particular interpreter they want. Hopefully this issue of funds will not be an issue.”*

*“In some ways, it would improve services because more people would be aware of the availability of an interpreter if they were wary before about interpreters. The problem is that presumably deaf people would still not have full access to the same services that hearing people have access to. There would be a unit and therefore they would have to give priority to certain situations. What would happen if a deaf person used their quota of their allowances and then had an emergency situation e.g. hospital/ accident and had no more allowances left?”*

*“It would depend on how the allowances are awarded- if a cash allowance is given to individuals then NO, but if it is awarded in a similar way to access to work then YES. Deaf people should have a right to communication support when and where they themselves decided. i.e. to include education, such as Adult Ed and trips to banks and building societies etc. where at the moment funding is impossible to arrange.”*

Currently the Agency operates by receiving funds from local authorities to secure the right to have access to interpreters. Deaf people themselves do not pay for the service.

The idea proposed was to use a scheme based on credit points where each person is allocated a number of hours they can use each year. It would be up to the person how, when and where they could use those interpreters (not the money). If it works it could widen opportunities,

increase independence and bring more choice. Currently this scheme is being tried in Germany and some other countries.

## 4.8 Further comments

### 4.8.1 About training

*“Something must be provided when people pass stage 3 and want to start interpreting. They should not be used by agencies until they have completed an introduction to interpreting course. Agencies should use stage 3 people under almost any circumstances and monitoring of trainees like myself should be provided and continued until qualified”.*

### 4.8.2 About the Agency, the booking, and fee

This provoked a wide range of comments:

- Agency should not charge VAT
- should not charge individuals fee for full contract fee.
- Deaf not given choice as which interpreter asked for.
- Wessex should not employ interpreters only free lances.
- Wessex charge booking fee that push organisation off and they prefer direct booking with interpreters especially education.
- RNID charge too much for their courses and it stops freelances from going on these courses. \*
- Hard of hearing people are not aware of the services.
- The unit should be manned 24 hours not have an answering machine.
- More consideration as to which interpreter to send to a certain job i.e. not to send new interpreter to court, but someone with more experience.
- Wessex use trainee that never should worked in that field before.
- Wessex should be based in Bristol or at each County Social Services.

*“Point to think about where the Agency is concerned: Increment salary, Weekend work, Relationship, too big too powerful, not approachable on various request.”*

### 4.8.3 General comments from the interviewees

*“My concern is that some deaf users receive a very good service whilst others receive nothing. There is still not enough awareness about how to use interpreters or about the fact that interpreters are confidential. The main problem still appears to be the lack of interpreters limited choice, availability, etc. The demand is rising but the interpreter numbers are remaining the same. Current interpreters overworked and more likely to burn out and leave the profession. The difficult relationship (sometimes) between agencies and hearing service providers with the deaf community still continue although is slowly improving. I think Wessex should try to improve that relationship more actively starting with it being more accessible- geographically and administratively, also, I hope that the growth of interpreting services does not damage or limit the involvement of other hearing professionals in learning to sign and in providing their services directly. Hearing people in general may find it too easy to reach out for an interpreter without directly dealing with the deaf user. Deaf people I think have repeatedly stressed the importance and often a preference for dealing with the hearing person (service providers or users or organisation) directly.; I will be very interested to read the final report especially to read the comments of deaf users themselves.”*

The comments from the interpreters are wide ranging and do not require detailed examination of the motives and methodology. Further analysis will be offered in later sections of the report.

## **Chapter 5: The Deaf Users**

One of the key aspects of the study was to determine the views of deaf people who had used interpreters. It was their experience, which would be vital in determining the effectiveness of the project.

### **5.1 Aims**

The purpose of this part of the project was to obtain feedback from users on their experiences of contact with the Wessex agency and of the situations in which they had used interpreters.

### **5.2 Method**

It is not obvious how many deaf people have used the service at any one time. Clearly, there must be at least one user for every appointment, but there is the implication that there may be many users in some situations, and there may be repeated use by the same user on a number of individual assignments. It is therefore difficult to discover exactly how many deaf people are using interpreters. The approach taken here was to send a letter to all those who had booked an interpreter in the previous six month period and to ask them to complete a simple response sheet which would allow the project team to get in touch.

Over 100 letters were sent to deaf users and 32 replies were received, indicating that they would like to participate. Of these only 26 were in the region and were sign language users. Contact was made by Minicom and letter; finally 23 were interviewed in their homes or at their local deaf club.

### **5.3 The Users**

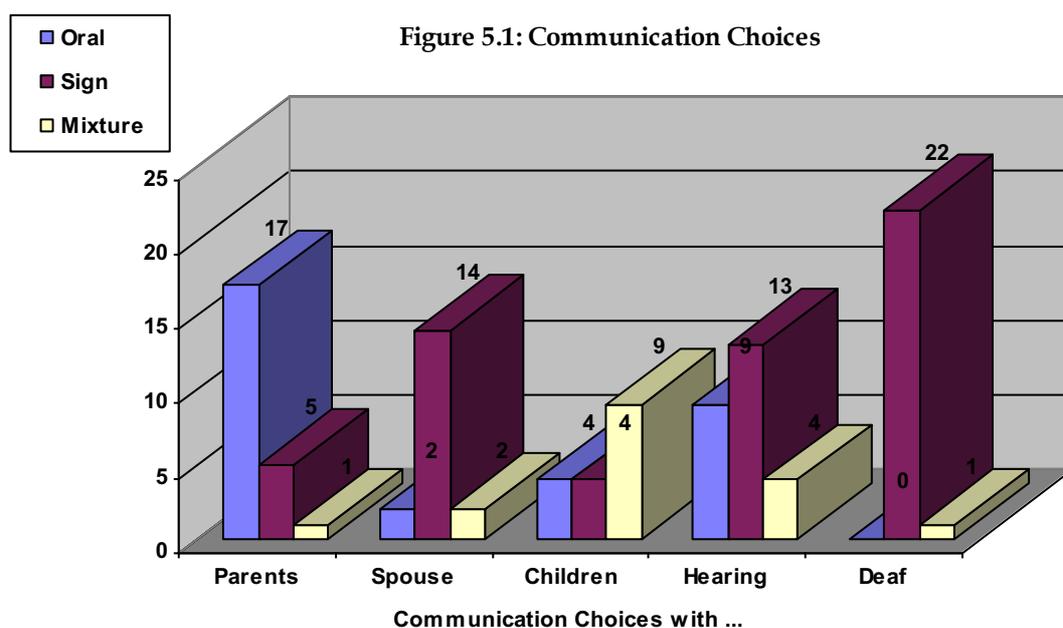
There were 10 males (43%) in the sample. The majority came from the original County of Avon (57%), with the others from Wiltshire (39%) and Somerset (4%). They were aged under 25 years (8%), between 25 and 40 years (48%), between 41 and 55 years (30%) and over 56 years (13%). Most had been to deaf primary schools (74%), while 2 people (9%) had attended a hearing school. The remainder had been to a Unit at a mainstream school. At secondary school the vast majority had attended a deaf school (91%). Nearly all had learned sign while still at school (91%) with 61% having learned before the age of 10 years.

Seven (30%) claimed to be in professional jobs, with equal numbers (5) in Office or Manual jobs or Unemployed (22% each). Most (61%) were in full-time employment. Most had left school at 16 years or earlier (70%) and 57% had been to college. The same number (13) had obtained GCSE or equivalent, though only 4 had obtained an A-level. These characteristics of employment reflect the situation of deaf people at present. They can reach professional levels but their qualifications and background may look different to that of a comparable sample of hearing people.

In self rating of hearing loss, 74% considered themselves profoundly deaf; 65% never wore a hearing aid; only 3 (13%) claimed to wear an aid all the time. Just over half were married. Five had married other deaf people and most had deaf relatives. Only five had no relatives who were deaf. Seventy-eight used sign first at school.

The 23 deaf users were in composition as follows

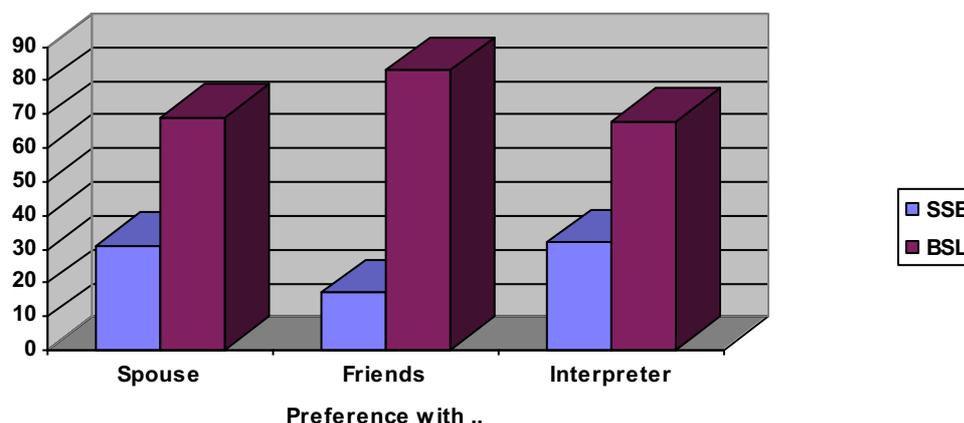
- Gender:** 10 males, 13 females
- Place:** 09 from Wiltshire, 13 from Avon, 01 from Somerset.
- Age:** 2 were under 25; 11 between 25-40; 07 between 40- 55  
03 were over 55
- Elementary schools** 17 attended Deaf schools; 3 attended a Deaf Unit at a hearing school; 2 attended hearing school  
1 had a mixture of more than one of the above
- Secondary school** 21 attended deaf schools; 1 attended hearing school and  
1 attended more than one school of the above



In Figure 5.1, we can see the pattern of communication choices. Not surprisingly, most people used speech at home with their parents, but sign with deaf friends. Interestingly people, were more likely to use a mixture with their children. This fits with some recent research (Johnson, 1994), which showed the extent of code switching in hearing children in deaf families and the choice of a sign mixture most of the time. It is also significant that a considerable number claimed to use sign with hearing friends.

When asked about interpreting and the mode of sign, which they wanted, most wanted BSL (Figure 5.2). Interestingly, less preferred BSL with the interpreter than with spouse or with friends.

**Figure 5.2: Communication Preference**



#### 5.4: The Results

In their first experience of sign interpreters which had usually happened before the age of 20 years, 41% claimed they did not understand or understood only some of the signing. When asked about the situations in which interpreters were used and how this changed as they had grown older, there were surprisingly few situations in which interpreters were used to any great extent.

Table 5.1: Instances when interpreters were reported to be used: Percentage of possible entries by age

<i>Situation</i>	%
At the doctor	6
At the hospital	4
At a job interview	15
At a meeting for deaf people	10
At a meeting for hearing people	21
At college	15
At a Union meeting	4
At a parent meeting	22
In a social service situation	12
While shopping	0

We can see from Table 5.1, that interpreters are most likely to be used in contact situations in hearing meetings, job interviews and at college. Interpreters are rarely encountered in the

doctor's surgery, or in hospital<sup>3</sup>. This seems rather strange as these would seem to be circumstances when clear communication would be very important.

Of the respondents, over half had used an interpreter in the previous week. In their most recent use, 87% had used the Wessex Agency. In this situation, 53% had been on their own ie without other deaf people. In most cases there was only one interpreter. All respondents felt they had understood the interpreter's signing all or most of the time. However, only 56% felt that the interpreter had understood them all of the time. This was reflected in the rating of overall communication, where around 60% rated the voice-sign and sign-voice interpreting as good or excellent.

For the last interpreter whom they had employed, each user gave a rating for a number of aspects (Table 5.2). These would seem to be satisfactory ratings. In the question of confidentiality, 22% claimed that they did not know. Although the implication is that because they were deaf, they would not hear from hearing people whether the interpreter had mentioned any information from the meeting, it indicates that there is not yet full trust in the interpreter's code of practice.

Table 5.2: Ratings of most recent interpreting

<i>Aspect</i>	Percent rating as good
Behaviour	74
Attitude	70
Clothes	65
Time-keeping	87
Confidentiality	70
Training	43
Experience	61
Help to you	70

Knowledge about Wessex varied. People had heard about Wessex through their work (26%), from other deaf people (26%) and had read about it (13%). Most, identified correctly that Wessex was part of RNID (78%) but 22% thought RNID paid for it and 26% did not know. The largest group (35%) recognised it as a combination of funding. However, 57% did not know how many people worked for Wessex (even roughly). Most had contacted Wessex through a hearing worker or friend (57%) and relatively few had used the Minicom themselves (13%). Fifty-two percent found it easy or very easy to contact Wessex and only 17% found it difficult. Most had their booking confirmed within a week (57%) and most booked at least one month before the appointment. The hit rate was 70% - the number who always or nearly always were successful in getting an interpreter. Most asked for a specific interpreter (57%).

This is a little different from the previous Table (5.1) as this one deals only with the use of Wessex interpreters. Most likely situations in this question are hospital and work.

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<sup>3</sup> We would expect this situation to change at least in Wiltshire where there is an initiative to provide interpreters in precisely these situations.

We asked people about their behaviour when the interpreter arrived (Table 5.4) and at the end of an assignment (Table 5.5). Both questions produced interesting responses.

Table 5. 3: Use of Wessex interpreters

<i>Situation</i>	%
Hospital	61
Doctor	43
Other personal	43
Work	65
Conference	43
Training Course	52
Social	9
Interview	39

Table 5.4: When an interpreter comes do you.... ?(%)

<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>Always</i>	<i>Never</i>
Explain the aim of the meeting	61	22
Say you want BSL, SSE etc	43	43
Tell interpreters where to stand	52	26
Explain to hearing people	39	39
Give the interpreter's name	22	57

Table 5.5: At the end of the meeting do you ...? (%)

<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>Always</i>	<i>Never</i>
Thank the interpreter	70	4
Thank the hearing person	30	34
Give feedback to the interpreter	17	30
Ask questions of the interpreter	22	61
Complain to the interpreter about the hearing person	4	57
Ask advice of the interpreter	0	74

We can see that there has been some progress from the days when the deaf person seemed to be dependent on the social worker's interpreting. Now the responses seem to be more professional in terms of the expectations of the deaf user.

Where problems arose many people complained to Wessex (61%) or to RNID (35%) but more complained to deaf friends (74%). The complaints are shown in Table 5.6 in the following page.

Table 5.6: Frequency of problems (%)

<i>Problem</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Never</i>
Interpreter late	4	35
Interpreter not turn up	0	39
Interpreter no BSL	9	61

Interpreter no SSE	9	70
Interpreter stop deaf for repeat	26	17
Interpreter stop hearing for repeat	22	13
Interpreter attitude	13	39
Interpreter fingerspelling	13	39
Interpreter signs from different area	35	17

The other responses to the question were “a little”. Neither lack of SSE nor of BSL appeared as a problem. Interpreters seemed to be able to meet the need. Otherwise most responses are in the middle of the range and indicate neither great satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

When asked about the change in service and access since before the Wessex Agency, users were very positive. They claimed there was more access to information (83%), better information (87%), it was easier to take courses (70%), there were better interpreters (61%), and 96% thought that things were better for the deaf community.

When asked about the interpreting skills or characteristics which were very important, users claimed Full BSL (91%), SSE (26%), Clear lip-patterns (39%), Good speech (70%), Good English (83%), having a Deaf family (26%), being in the Deaf community (57%), understanding the Deaf way (87%), Clear fingerspelling (70%), use of other languages (9%) and special subject knowledge (65%).

Users felt that interpreters should have a break after 30 minutes (70%) but that interpreters could sign to the deaf person during the break (70%), though fewer felt they should talk to the hearing people (48%).

Questions 1- 5 can be seen in the compositions of the users above (5.3)

## 5.5 Responses to Open-ended questions

This section examines the comments of deaf users to open questions. These extended their views on interpreters, on the Agency and their experiences, where the questionnaire allowed it.

The purpose of this part of the questionnaire was to allow the users to express more general views and feelings. One problem for transcribing deaf users comments was their reluctance to be filmed, but the task of transcribing from video of those who were filmed was straightforward. The quotes provided here are therefore, English translations, in note form, of what was signed live.

### 5.5.1 First experience - when

We asked the users to tell us when they saw the interpreter for the first time? What did they think of the interpreter?

Of the 17 respondents, 4 had seen interpreters for the first time on television, some years ago, 4 had attended meetings, which had an interpreter there, 2 had attended training at college and 3 had seen their social worker as an interpreter.

### 5.5.2 First experience - comments

They then commented on their first impressions. After years of trying to manage by themselves, or relying on family members to help, for the first time they saw either a TV programme, or a meeting with a person who was able to provide access. The interpreter had usually been arranged by someone else. This was bound to create an impact.

*“Interpreters are great, they give better access”* (Deaf man in his 20’s)

*“Good attitude, never felt problem with deafness”* (Deaf man in his 30’s)

*“Excellent service - No problem at all”* (Deaf man in his 20’s)

These responses tended not to answer the question. It is likely that it was hard to remember the first occasion when there was an interpreter.

### 5.5.3 Negative comments

*“The Interpreter was hopeless, I rely on lip reading and the words said by the interpreter were not the same as said by a hearing person.”* (Deaf woman in her 30’s)

The deaf woman was watching the interpreter; what was signed to her did not match her impression of the hearing speaker. She could lip read fairly well and thought she understood what was said. Looking at the interpreter she believed that the content was not the same as what she lip-read. This could happen because of the time lag between words that were spoken and the interpreted signs. However, the interpreter may have chosen different words to convey the message or it could also be, that the interpreter or the deaf person, did not understand the topic of discussion.

*“I signed but I felt he got the wrong information. The interpreter gave the wrong views to the committee”* (Deaf man in his 40’s)

The deaf person felt that his signed speech was not understood correctly by the interpreter and therefore was not interpreted correctly to the committee. The committee members understood his comments differently from those he tried to express.

*“One interpreter is not good, because I have to wait for the interpreter to receive information in full before he signs to me - later I have to sign all the story to the interpreter and only when he understand me fully he explains to hearing person”* (Deaf woman in her early 30’s)

In consecutive interpreting, the deaf person signs his/her message, and the interpreter understands the whole story. Meanwhile, the hearing person has to wait, without understanding what is going on. When the interpreter understands he/she speaks to the hearing person. During this time the deaf person does nothing but may try to lip read what is

being said. When the interpreter stops, the hearing person makes his/her comment, the interpreter waits until the hearing person finishes. Only then does the interpreter turn to the deaf person and signs what the hearing person has said. Any smile, or reaction from either partner, can cause suspicions to arise, because of the inability to hear or to understand. If the interpreter has chosen to use different words to explain what has been signed or used words that a deaf person cannot understand; the deaf person may lose confidence in the interpreter.

#### 5.5.4 Bad experiences of interpreting

The questionnaire had questions relating to the quality of interpreters, their time keeping, dress and signing skills. However, there was also the opportunity to express feelings about bad incidents, which deaf users would not forget.

Ten people (45% of the deaf users) said that they did not have any bad experiences. Four people mentioned the quality of the interpreters, their signing, or their time keeping:

*"Turned up to an important meeting and interpreter was so late I gave my apology to hearing people by telling them that Wessex Agency gave wrong information and venue. This is not a professional attitude."* (Deaf woman over 40)

The interpreter arrived late at this assignment. Not even knowing the reasons behind this lateness, the deaf user felt she had to give reasons for the late arrival of the interpreter. She told the hearing people that the interpreter was given the wrong address. The deaf person felt it was not professional to be late.

*"Interpreters with stage 2 went along to an important situation and were unable to understand me - I had to repeat several times and then gave up. I asked for stage 3 but I don't get the quality of interpreters."* (Deaf woman in her 30's)

The woman, who is a BSL user, asked specifically for a Stage 3 Interpreter (CACDP qualification) to be assigned. The Agency sent a less qualified trainee, who failed to understand the signing of the deaf person, and that person got very upset and gave up trying to communicate.

*"Once the interpreter added information; later I found it was his and not the chairperson"* (Deaf man in his 50's)

This continues to be a problem either because the interpreter feels the need to explain some concepts or because the interpreter has misunderstood some of the content.

*"Went to a meeting about a travel agency bankrupt case, I used Wessex interpreter. I gave my story and I saw that interpreter did not say the same as I said"*. (Deaf woman in her 50's).

The inability to hear often caused suspicions to increase and apparent deviations by the interpreters are seen as professional distortions.

### 5.5.5 Good experiences of interpreting

Although deaf users did not mention many good incidents, which had happened to them, most did agree that interpreters meant better access, and more information. Five said they did not have any specific good experiences with the interpreters. Three said that 'yes' they had had good experiences but did not expand on it. One complimented the interpreter who even at very short notice turned up at a hospital in an emergency.

*"Turned up at last minute at emergency in hospital (very rare)"* (Deaf woman in her early 50's)

The addition of '(very rare)' was because the deaf person felt that this was an exceptional case. One commented that the interpreter sent for an assignment was an easy going one, and others said that the interpreter helped them gain access to information.

*"Had one with good experience and using some humour and feel relaxing and has good sense of humour"* (Deaf woman in her early 30's)

One said that he had a few interpreters, some were good but he was not so pleased with some others.

*"I had 12 interpreters, 7-8 of them were not so good, the rest were OK"* (Deaf man in his 50's)

*"So far I have always felt part of any meeting at any level without feeling left out"* (Deaf man in his 40's)

Deaf people often feel left out of hearing meetings. The provision of the interpreter helped this user take part.

*"Yes - nice people giving support"* (Deaf woman in her 30's)

Interpreters provided are "nice people" even though they are just carrying out a job. The deaf person tends to see it as gesture and not yet as a right to access.

*"Doctor pleased with interpreter with deaf people"* (Deaf woman in her 30's)

This is the same theme as above, where the deaf user is still feeling disadvantaged. The doctor being pleased is significant to this user.

### 5.5.6 Interpreters' skills in general

Nineteen people i.e. 90% commented that deaf people were often asked to repeat signed messages because the interpreter could not understand at first, and stated that it disturbed their train of thought. At other times, interpreters asked the lecturer to stop and go back over the text because they could not understand the content or missed what was said last.

*"Went to a course and I told interpreter what the content would be, then the interpreter stopped the lecture because he could not understand the content and I felt embarrassed"* (Deaf man in his 30's)

Five said that they could not comment on the quality of voice to sign or sign to voice, because they could not hear, and they had nothing to compare with.

When a hearing person understands two languages, he/she can comment on the quality of interpreting/translating between the two languages because he/she can hear and compare. But few deaf people are able to check if:

- The interpreter understands them correctly
- The interpreter conveys the signing accurately
- The hearing person understands the interpreter
- The interpreter understands the hearing person's speech correctly

Deaf people are more sensitive to body language and to facial expression than hearing people are. They will become far more suspicious than the hearing person. Hearing people live in a world of sound and they are able to detect whether general whispers, or a laugh, are at their expense, and understand that not every laugh heard on entering a room is about them. Deaf people do not have a chance to develop this in the hearing world).

*“Cannot compare because don't know what talking about because unable to hear“* (Deaf woman in her 40's)

*“Some interpreters using voice over are not good”* (Deaf man in his late 20's)

It is interesting to note that although some think that their deafness stopped them from commenting on quality of sign to voice interpreting; others commented that the quality of voice over is not so good.

### **5.5.7 Location of the Interpreting Agency**

The unit is based in Corston, outside the centre of Bath, on the A4 road that leads from Bath to Bristol. The office is at the top of a hill in a Business Park and a car is necessary.

Deaf people who do not feel comfortable using the phone, (Minicom), may be put off by the idea of trying to travel to the Agency. Corston is about 25 minutes drive from the Centre of Bristol, 10 minutes drive from the Centre of Bath. The most realistic way for Deaf users to contact the Agency is either by post, or by calling in with a Minicom. Whichever method is chosen, English is the language required, which deaf people may find problematic. There is no way for a deaf person to find out who answered his/her call or letter, or what the reactions are to it. There is no personal touch and no way of developing trust and a good relationship. Several respondents complained about the Agency being based in Corston. Ten people thought that it was difficult to contact the Agency, when we asked them. Only 5 people claimed that it was easy.

*“There should be access to service at the deaf club; interpreters have always problem of car park. I have problem booking interpreters. (Deaf woman over 55)*

Deaf people believe that one of the reasons Wessex moved to Corston was the car parking space which they did not have in the Centre of Bath. They much preferred to book an interpreter face to face than by Minicom or by post. One person described the difficulties when contacting Wessex

*“The way Wessex answer, don’t always give name, deaf become suspicious”* (Deaf man in his late 50’s)

When hearing people call each other, they usually identify the caller by recognising the voice. Deaf people who use the Minicom cannot see who is the caller and cannot *recognise* typed letters as the Minicom always look the same. It is easy to deceive Minicom users as to who is on the other side. Therefore, deaf people can be uncomfortable about the person who seems to be on the other end.

Although only two people made this comment, many others preferred to book the interpreter themselves at the local based office or at the deaf club:

*“It would be a good idea to form small units in each town. It can encourage people to become interpreters and will give better access to deaf people”* (Deaf man in his 50’s)

By having smaller units in each town it could give greater access to deaf people. Also having the Unit locally can provide more employment and encourage people to learn sign and become interpreters. It could mean that access is easier in times of emergency.

*“I live on my own, I have deaf friends but know my village well. Village people sign to me, but I find I can not go and get interpreters by myself”* (Deaf woman in her late 20’s)

Independence is valued but the deaf person may feel this is threatened if it is not easy to book interpreters directly.

### 5.5.8 Improving the Wessex Agency

We asked participants how they would improve services: people had various opinions and suggestions, mostly concerned with the quality and number of interpreters. Three referred to publicity.

*“More publicity, more advertisement etc.”.* (Deaf man in his 20’s)

Many deaf people still do not know about Wessex. By having better publicity, it would create awareness and more hearing people would book or use an interpreter. Four said that there was a need for a better location or at least a representative from the Agency to be based in each deaf club, so that deaf people could have a personal contact.

*“To find a way where deaf people can say that they don’t want to have Mr. X as an interpreter without Mr. X to know”* (Deaf man in his 40’s)

Two said that Wessex needed to find a way to identify who was on the line when phoning. For example a starting message such as the following could help: ‘This is the Wessex Agency here, Fred speaking, can I help?’

Four people said that Wessex needed to recruit more and better interpreters, and that they should provide in-house training to ensure interpreters are up to date with training.

*“Interpreters need refreshment courses, deaf need to monitor performances”* (Deaf woman under 30)

*“Need more interpreters to shorten waiting time and faster working at short notice”* (Deaf man in his 40’s)

*“not enough choices of interpreters”* (Deaf woman in her 50’s)

Two said that Wessex need more men interpreters:

*“Need men interpreters to pick from”* (Deaf man in his 30’s)

*“Need men interpreters- know deaf men has limited access, same person all the time”* (Deaf man in his late 20’s)

This is an issue because interpreters *voice over* the deaf person ‘s signing. If the deaf person is a man and the interpreter is a woman then there is a mismatch. Deaf people may prefer to have male interpreter for a deaf man and woman interpreter if the user is a female.

### 5.5.9 Deaf people as interpreters

In conferences, especially international ones, some deaf people act as interpreters in International Sign. A hearing speaker presents and one interpreter signs in the national sign language. Other deaf interpreters translate into international sign. These are similar to ‘relay’ interpreters who work in the same language. At a conference, the interpreter sitting in the front row signs to a deaf person on the stage, who then signs to the audience. However only people who are involved in international conferences or BDA conferences will be familiar with this procedure.

When we asked if deaf people could become interpreters, half said that deaf people *could not* become interpreters. Seven people mentioned that deaf people could use international sign; two said that deaf people could be interpreters for Deaf-Blind people; eight said that they could become relay interpreters; two said that if deaf people had training they too could become interpreters.

*“...Through another interpreter (hearing) who will translate with deaf interpreter”* (Deaf woman in her late 20’s)

*“Abroad also at work where there are other deaf people”* (Deaf man in his late 20’s)

If there is a place of work where there is more than one deaf employee and if one deaf person has better communication skills than the other, he/she is often used as an interpreter. Also,

while on holiday, if one deaf person manages better with communicating in another country, that deaf person will be used as an interpreter to help communication.

*“Relay interpreters for blind or international sign”* (Deaf woman in her 40’s)

*“International, relay interpreters. One to one if needed, from deep BSL or like youth signs or other culture signs like black BSL”* (Deaf man in his 30’s)

### 5.5.10 Other more general comments

At the end of the questionnaire we left space to allow respondents to add additional information. Some were positive

*“Interpreters are great, they allow access to some areas where we have not had in the past- better than involving families i.e. hospitals interview - we need more of them (interpreters)”* (Deaf woman in her 20’s)

Others focused on training:

*“Some of Wessex interpreters need further training, it is not just interpreting skills but to know how to deliver them in the right way. Some of interpreters style make me feel sleepy”* (Deaf man in his 40’s)

*“Main problems that the RNID is not encouraging those interpreters to attend up to date training or special subjects training”* (Deaf woman in her 50’s)

Hearing people who listen to lectures, can often shut their eyes for a while and still listen to what is being said. Deaf people rely on their eyes to receive the message. This can be very tiring after a short while.

*“Some interpreters should improve their receptive skills, they need to put into practice their training especially where English is concerned.”* (Deaf woman in her 30’s)

This deaf lady felt that interpreters needed more training on how to apply what they had learned. Her comment about “especially where English is concerned” referred to BSL-English skills. She felt interpreters needed more training to improve that skill and their level of English pronunciation.

Some commented on the interpreters' code:

*“Earrings, buttons light shine them difficult to follow because difficult to concentrate don’t like to repeat interpreter to get my information or make me confused by repeating, when want to say something, we have to wait then forget to say everything in the end - I prefer to see correct dress on interpreters and correct lights in case of interpreter to make sure curtains deal with the light problem.”* (Deaf woman in her 30’s)

Two people were concerned about confidentiality and roles:

*“It happen that interpreter using information from meetings, some interpreters have dual role and it is wrong because they don’t keep confidentiality” (Deaf man in his 50’s).*

*“Also when interpreters say they go on assignment they should say that they go on behalf of Wessex not to a venue or to interpreter for Mr. xxxxx or for xxxxx.” (Deaf man in his 50’s).*

The first deaf person highlighted the dual role problem and indicates the problem of confidentiality which arises. One person said that once, her friend was taken in an emergency to hospital where she blacked out and when she woke up, there was an interpreter there who had been called by the hospital. She was not very happy about it, however, when upon release from the hospital she saw a social worker for the deaf who commented, “I heard you have been in hospital, hope you are feeling better now.” She was so angry about it. The concern was genuine perhaps, but the deaf person did not want anyone to know of her illness and yet it had been made public. So how can deaf people trust interpreters?

It may not be the case that the interpreter told the Social Worker; it could well be that the hospital called the Social Services to ask for an interpreter, but that shows the suspicion deaf people have towards interpreters and their confidentiality. They find it hard to know whether interpreters are discussing their assignments afterward.

*“Interpreters should be aware of themselves when meet deaf professionals, - I find it difficult to use interpreter when I know it is needed like in hospital,” (Deaf woman in her 50’s)*

Some deaf people are well known in the deaf community. When they need an interpreter they feel that the interpreters are not relaxed because they feel they, the interpreters, are under scrutiny. But this can restrict the choice of interpreters for this deaf person too.

*“Interpreters are not living in Salisbury, if there is an emergency and call for interpreters, the time will be wasted by driving to Salisbury from Bristol, Dorset etc. which might cost a deaf person's life.” (Deaf man in his 40’s).*

Some complained about the change of interpreter when there were breaks. Possibly, one interpreter had a style that was clear to understand, while the other was not, so the deaf person’s understanding was switched on for 20 minutes and switched off for the following 20 minutes.

*“Every 30 minutes break for interpreters each time- also deaf people need same breaks.” (Deaf man in his 40’s)*

*“I had 2 interpreters they were having every 20 minutes break but I did not like it.” (deaf woman in her 40’s)*

## 5.6 Implications

We can see from this set of data that there have been many positive outcomes for deaf people by the provision of interpreting services. We can also see that there are still some reservations on the part of deaf people. Some of these come about because of the lack of awareness of the

service and its aims, and some are genuine problems of communicating with a remote centre. The old role confusion among community workers interpreting for deaf people seems to have gone in this sample, and there is a clear understanding of the limits of the interpreter's job.

## **Chapter 6: The Deaf Non-Users**

Although the Deaf Non Users could not comment on the Service provided or the interpreters, their views were important. They could tell us why they were not using it and how they managed in their every day lives without interpreting support.

### **6.1 The Aims**

The purpose of this part of the data collection was to find out from deaf individuals, how they managed with their doctors, hospitals, employment, etc. It was also important to learn what they knew about interpreting services and why they did not use the service if they knew about it. If the project in its training and service development, hoped to have an impact on the community, their views were very important.

### **6.2 The method**

By prior arrangement with the deaf club, two researchers went to various regional deaf clubs and selected 8 people from each region, 4 male and 4 female, in different age groups. The interview then took place at the club. Three counties were selected, Avon, Wiltshire, and Somerset. Although Gloucester was initially to be part of the Wessex area, they set up their own interpreting unit within the deaf club and the time available for interviews did not enable us to reach this location too. In all 24 people were interviewed.

### **6.3 The Non-Users**

From each region there were 4 male and 4 female - from different age groups.

Four age groups were selected

Under 25; 25 -40; 40-55; and over 55 years

Of the 24 interviewees 17 (70%) attended Primary deaf school, 3(13%) attended a special unit in a hearing school, and 4 (17%) attended normal hearing school. In their secondary education, 18 (75%) attended Deaf school and 6 (25%) attended a special unit. No one had attended a mainstream hearing school.

Three learned to sign from birth, 12 learned before the age of 10 years. Seven (29%) learned in their teens. One learned to sign after she reached 20 years old. Two (9%) had a professional job, 1 (4%) worked in an office, 4 (17%) worked in a skilled job, 11 (48%) had a manual job and 5 (22%) were unemployed.

One had left school at the age of 14, two at the age of 15 and 21 at the age of 16 years. Only 8 continued to College, 3 had 1 GCSE, one had 2 GCSEs, 3 had 3 GCSEs, 1 had 4 GCSEs, and 1 had 5 GCSEs. None of them had any A' levels.

Of the total group 17 were profoundly deaf, 3 were severely deaf and 4 were partially deaf. Eight wore hearing aids at all times, 2 sometimes and 14 never wore hearing aids. Eight were single, nine were married, 3 divorced, 3 widow/er.

Six did not have any deaf people in the family, 3 had either a brother or sister deaf, Eight had their spouse deaf, 1 had deaf children, four had deaf relatives. One had a combination of the above.

### **6.3.1 About their communication**

Sixteen started sign at school, 5 at home, 3 could not remember. Nine communicated at home in childhood through speech only, 9 by speech and gestures, 1 by speech and signs, 4 used BSL and 1 did not reply. One communicated with spouse in speech, 4 communicated using spoken language and gestures, 1 used speech and sign, 4 used SSE and six used BSL. Eight said it was not applicable to them (singles). Three communicated in speech only with their children, 4 used sign and speech, another 4 used SSE while 13 said it was not applicable to them. Five used speech and sign when communicating with their deaf friends, 15 used BSL with their friends but only 5 used BSL with their hearing friends. The rest used a mixture of SSE, speech and gestures. When an interpreter was available, 4 communicated in speech with the interpreter (knowing he/she is hearing). Only 5 claimed to use BSL to an interpreter. Nine did not reply.

One preferred the interpreter to use speech with them, 1 preferred speech and sign, 16 preferred BSL and 6 preferred SSE.

## **6.4 Results**

### **6.4.1 Signed Picture**

The results of this test were inconclusive as there were inconsistent results from the deaf participants.

### **6.4.2 First experience**

When we asked about their first experience and when did they see an interpreter

2 (8%) said they saw interpreter for the first time on TV.

1 (4%) said an interpreter came with him to hospital

1 (4%) said saw his daughter as interpreter

2 (8%) had the interpreter at collage

2 (8%) had it as chaplain in the church

1 (4%) had never seen an interpreter.

7 (29%) commented on the impression it made rather than on the situation

“It was a relief, at last I had full communication”

### 6.4.3 The Conditions

When we asked what were the conditions at the time when they first saw the interpreter and what they thought of it, 8 commented positively 3 gave negative comments

1 said will only use interpreter for a meeting.

*“Very confusing”*

*“I could not follow everything they said.”*

*“Receiving full information & in church interpreting understand well.”*

It seemed that some adjustment was necessary to use an interpreter. When we asked if the signing was understood, 14 said yes it was clear, 6 said some of it was understood.

### 6.4.4 Communication in various places

In this section we have asked them who helped them communicate in places like doctors office, hospitals, job interviews, social services, etc. at various age groups as a child, as a teen and as an adult. The picture appeared was very much the same as the Users group. That can be explained because the interpreter profession only started in recent years, so the different was not visible for the years before. In some questions where the answer is not relevant like age group between 0-12 would not comment on job interviews or younger participant will not comment on their later years, so to ensure the majority is included, the selection we concentrate on is their answers regarding the period between their 20-30 age.

**At the Doctor**, 16 (67%) use to go alone, 1 (4%) went with member of the family, and 1 went with a missionaries 6 (25%) said it was not applicable to them, either because they did not remember or they never went to the doctor.

**At the hospital**, 11 (46%) went with no one to help them (alone), 1 (4%) went with a member of the family and 1 (4%) went with a missionaries. 11 (46%) said they never went to hospital.

**Job Interview**, Ten (42%) went alone without extra help. 2 (8%) used an interpreter, 1 (4%) went with a missionaries 2 (8%) used someone else to help them. 9 (38%) said it was not applicable to them. (Some got a job after school without an interview and stay at the same employment through).

**Meeting for Deaf**, Fifteen (63%) did not need an interpreter and never used one. 1 (4%) went with an interpreter, and 8 (33%) said it was not applicable to them.

**Meeting with hearing**, Seven (29%) did not have anyone to help them, 1 (4%) went with an interpreter and 16 (67%) said it was not applicable as they never attend hearing meetings.

**At College**, All 24 said it was not applicable as no one attended college at that age, (20-30) However, for those who attended college at earlier years, 4 (17%) had an interpreter, 1 (4%) did not have any help and 19 said it was not applicable to them.

**Union meetings**, 1 (4%) went along alone, 23 (96%) said they never attended union meetings.

**Parents meetings**, Five (21%) never had any help, 1 (4%) went with a neighbour, and 18 said it was not applicable to them

**Social Services**, 5 (21%) never needed help, 19 (79%) said they never need social services.

**Shopping**- all 24 (100%) did the shopping themselves.

#### **6.4.5 Bad experiences**

Although these groups categorise as Non User some still had interpreters occasionally, they did not use the Service but perhaps a family member went along with them. a neighbour, etc. So when we asked them if they have had any bad experiences using interpreters,:

Because most of them did not use interpreter at all, they could not respond but 5 (21%) did reply

One (4%) said the interpreter was not clear to understand, 1 (4%) said he did not have bad experience but he does not trust their confidentiality. One (4%) said that interpreter never turned up or often came late. One (4%) said interpreter was not bad but did not give full access, and one (4%) complained about the interpreter at a job interview

#### **6.4.6 Good experiences**

When we asked them if they had any good experiences using an interpreter all 5 (21%) who responded commented about how good the interpreter was for them and the help he gave them.

#### **6.4.7 Their last interpreter**

For those who used an interpreter we asked them to comment on the last time when they use an interpreter.

When we asked when was the last time they used or saw an interpreter, 3 (13%) it was the week before, 3 (13%) said it was within the month before and 13 said it was more than a month before. 1(4%) said he never saw one, and 4 (17%) did not reply.

When we asked if the interpreter they saw was from Wessex, nine said yes, 9 (37%) said no 2 (8%) did not know and 4 (17%) did not reply. [Many of them saw interpreter for the first

time at an open meeting in the club that Wessex arranged couple of weeks before this interview took place (Bridgwater Deaf Club)].

When we ask how often they use an interpreter, 3 (13%) said they use between 1-5 times a week, (College) 1 (4%) said 1-2 times a month, 9 (37%) said between 1-12 times a year 5 (21%) said it was not applicable to them and 6 (25%) did not reply.

When we asked what was the last interpreter used for

Table 6.1: where was last interpreter used?

Job interview	Meeting at work	Health (GP, Hospital)	Course	Personal	N/A
5	1	3	6	3	6
21%	4%	13%	25%	12%	25%

When we ask if at the last time when they had interpreter was there one interpreter or two 14 (58%) said only 1 interpreter, two (8%) said they were 2 interpreter there and 8 (32%) said it was not applicable to them.

When we ask if they were the only deaf people there or where there other deaf people, 11 (46%) did not have any other deaf there, 5 (21%) said there were other deaf people there, between 20-50 deaf. and 8 (33%) said it was not applicable to them.

When we asked what they thought of the conditions then. 6 (25%) said it was very good. 6 (25%) said it was good. 5 (21%) said it was OK no one said it was bad and 7 (29%) did not reply.

We then ask set of question about their rating of their last interpreters

Table 6.2 How do they rate their last interpreters

Aspect	Percent rating as good
Behaviour	58%
Attitude	54%
Clothes	29%
Time keeping	11%
Confidentiality	38%
Training	25%
Experience	25%
Help	50%

When we asked if it was difficult for them to use an interpreter 4 (17%) said a lot, 12 (50%) said they have some difficulties 4 (17%) said they had no problem at all 1 (4%) could not tell and 3 (13%) did not reply.

### 6.4.8 Questions of opinions

We then asked series of question in theory, questions of opinion,

#### 6.4.8.1 Deaf Interpreters

If deaf can be interpreters 9 (38%) thought that deaf people could become interpreters, 12(50%) thought deaf could not become interpreters 3 (13%) did not know. When we ask how can deaf be interpreters , 2 (8%) said relay interpreting 3 (13%) said that they will need training, 1 (4%) said in TV and at work 1 (4%) said at GP's and on one to one basis. 4 (17%) said that yes deaf people can become interpreter but they don't know how.

#### 6.4.8.2 An Ideal Interpreter

how they perceive a good interpreter. Nine (37%) Said that interpreter need to be fluent in BSL that it is easy to understand them. Three (13%) said that interpreter needs to be confidential. 2 (8%) said that interpreter needs to be qualified. Seven (29%) said that interpreter should have specific skills. 3 (13%) said that it is important that interpreter give full information 2 (8%) said that interpreter must have knowledge of deaf culture and be involved in deaf community

*"Some deaf people could not always understand most interpreter cause they don't have use of BSL"*

*"Important to understand him"*

*"Have a good aware about deaf world"*

*"Good sign, Good looking, smart, always patience, very good body language."*

*"Must have knowledge of deaf culture, need good sign skills, must have at least stage 3, involved in the community"*

*"Full BSL, good English, high standard, should have specific skills i.e.: medical, legal, academic, etc."*

*"Need to see natural, as deaf people sign, must be registered, confidence, helpful"*

**6.4.8.3 An ideal Agency**, Although they were not a service users we asked to comment on how they perceive a good working Agency. 4 (17%) said that they prefer to book themselves, face to face at the local deaf club, 2 (8%) said that the Agency should have good access to Minicom. 1 (4%) said Agency should be cheaper (to employers) 1 (4%) said that Agency need more interpreters. 1 (4%) said that Agency should send the person requested and not someone else.

*"Prefer face to face"*

*" Good access to Minicom, small office in each town"*

*"Through Social Worker for the deaf"*

*"Cheap, many interpreters, each interpreter have Minicom, based at deaf club."*

*"Agency should send the person I asked for"*

#### 6.4.9 Other comments

In this section we have asked them to add any comment that perhaps the questionnaire did not cover. some of their comments were:

*“Must have interpreter to have full access to information in health and in court but I use my son to interpret for me His sign is great also can fully understand. Went in hospital and had operation, my son helped me. My son interpret for me in court to get social club bar licence.”*

*“I think they are doing well so far, I did not hear any complaints.”*

*“Lost our Social Worker as he always interpret for us, need interpreter her if want private conversation but unable to access to interpreter.”*

*“Never use interpreter, only son and daughter, no information about interpreters.”*

*“Need to improve their skills should spend more time with deaf people as social evening so they shall be aware of deaf people and interpreters confident”*

*“It is nice if you know the interpreter develop trust, the problem is when a new interpreter come and you don't know the person.”*

*“Wessex should publicised itself more, it will be good for deaf people have more access to information. Interpreters or agency should based at deaf clubs for easy access”.*

## **Chapter 7: General Summary**

### **7.1 Deaf users**

Deaf people are very sensitive regarding files that kept about them. Be it at the Social Services, hospitals, etc.

So when trying to approach a deaf person to get his/her support we had to be very careful so it would not be seen as we looked into files. Not to raise suspicion of where the information came from. In order to obtain names and address of deaf people who use the Agency we had to rely only on new bookings. So people who booked an interpreter received with the confirmation slip a letter from the University but which came from Wessex (See Appendix 4) That ask them to participate in our research.

Had we sent them letter direct from the University without Wessex as a by- pass, they would have lost their trust in the Wessex Agency thinking that Wessex allow the University to look into their files and get their names and addresses.

By doing so we limited ourselves to only new bookings. Had there been a booking in the past that the person had a bad service for instance and would not go back to use Wessex, there was no way for us to learn about it. If they were some users who often booked an interpreter but have not done so recently in the time of this research taken place, we could not get them to participate.

One hundred letters were sent to deaf users asking them to participate. Of this number around 30 returned the slip stating their wish to participate. Yet, some interviews were not practical as they were located in places like Milton Keynes, Dorset, Plymouth or they were using lip speakers and not sign language interpreters.

Some could not arrange to meet with us at a convenient date for them or for us. Because of the small number of replies we could not actually be selective and choose by area, age or sex. but we had to interview all those remaining. A total of 23 deaf users were interviewed.

### **7.2 Hearing users**

The hearing users of the Agency are those who use the interpreter to be the link between them and the deaf users. Be it Doctors and their GP's surgeries. Doctors in hospitals, solicitors, police officers, and the list can go on and on.

The nature of this use is usually a very private and personal one. No deaf person would like to know that we had contacted their GP's or their solicitor to inquire about their comments on the interpreters.

Also the only way to obtain these sorts of details is by looking through files. By doing so we breach trust of deaf users.

We could not find a way where a questionnaire could be sent to all doctors in general or all solicitors in general and ask them if they have been using an interpreter before and could they comment about them.

Those doctors will not know for sure if the Interpreter they had came from Wessex and their comments could be unjustified to the Agency if the interpreter did not come from Wessex.

After a deep discussion at length it was agreed that it would be best to drop this part of the research and perhaps in the future to concentrate on it in a different angle.

### **7.3 The Questionnaire (Appendix 3)**

When designing the questionnaire we had in mind all sectors of the Deaf community. Those who went to college and those who did not, Some are more intelligent than others. and we want to see, which group use the Service, how did they get to know about the service. How often they use it? what do they know about the service itself, what do they think of it? What problem do they encounter? What suggestion do they have to improve the service, etc.

Because of the small number of participant we felt it would be best if we kept the result of this research in numbers and where appropriate we added percentage, as percentage can sometimes be misleading.

### **7.4 The Interviews themselves**

When the slip of confirmation arrived we contacted the deaf users with a further letter suggesting a date and a place to meet. Some preferred to be interviewed at home away from spying eyes. While others preferred to be interviewed at the deaf club so they would not miss out on their normal activities. Some who came to the Centre for Deaf Studies were interviewed at the basement. To start with, the interviews were filmed as the method of passing the questions was by using sign language. It is not often easy to relate content of sign language into written English and in order not to stop deaf users from giving us their feedback, it was felt that it would be best done on video, and transcribe it at a later stage.

However after about 9 interviews we realized that this process is taken too long and perhaps transcribe will be done more quickly on a face-to-face interview at a live situation and was transcribed at the same time. In some cases especially in the outer Avon area, both researchers were involved in interviewing same person. One researcher was asking the questions and listening to the answers while the other researcher was transcribing it onto the questionnaire. They doubled check every answer to ensure correct transcribing was made. Where possible the interviews were made private and confidential. Deaf users were made to feel at ease and were reassured about the confidentiality of this research. Each interview last between 1 to 2 hours depends on the person and the level of communication and on how much that person was willing to reveal.

### **7.5 The Research Team**

At the beginning of this research only one researcher was appointed Eva Fielding-Jackson who was appointed for 12 hours a week until end of July 1995.

By the time the questionnaire for the interview was ready and by the time all replies slip were proceeded and along the other interviews in this project such as the Deaf Non users and the interpreters, time was too short to carry on with only one researcher. So another researcher was appointed Gloria Pullen who is profoundly deaf, very familiar with the deaf community and with a lot of experience in carrying out such interviews.

Gloria concentrated on the deaf people in Avon area and when deaf users from other areas such as Salisbury and Swindon were interview, both researchers went together to ensure all participant could be interviewed in no more than two journeys.

Gloria was appointed for a period of 3 months on an hourly pay basis.

### **7.6 My own view on the situation. (1995)**

Deaf people certainly miss the easy access they used to have when interpreters were based at the Deaf Club. (Social workers used as interpreters). They prefer to have interpreters they know, to ensure that trust develops and they can share their problems with them.

Between themselves they make comments about Wessex, being a greedy agency that does not really care for the needs of deaf people, but for the car parking problems of their staff, and for cheaper rent.

They say Wessex used to be based in the centre of Bath and moved because of money concerns, the rent and the car parking facilities, and not the well-being of the Deaf community.

It seems the more professional the deaf person is, so is his understanding and acceptance of the service with its pros and cons, yet, the majority of deaf people are not professionals. However the majority of people who use the service are those professionals who need an interpreter for their career, be it training, job interview, staff meeting, etc. The other group, who are not professionals, usually book for medical appointment, GP's or hospital.

For other more personal occasions, such as buying house, banking, etc. deaf people prefer to exchange notes or go with one of the family.

The interpreters themselves should have more training, definitely on the receptive skills side. Many deaf people are not happy being stopped and asked to repeat, it puts pressure on them and they tend to change their style to make it easy on interpreters and it affects their delivery.

Most deaf people don't know much about the service, they don't know how many interpreters there are, how exactly the booking are made, etc. They feel Wessex should attend deaf clubs and give talks about the service; this should not be done by interpreters as it means less interpreters being available for assignments, but Wessex should hire professional people, to improve the awareness at deaf clubs.

Wessex should consider having reps at Deaf clubs, so the deaf will have more access and will be able to develop a better understanding and stronger links, and in turn more use will be made of the service.

By so doing, the demands on the service will increase and Wessex and the RNID will be able to put more pressure on Local authorities and the Government to provide a more established and better financed service.

Unlike Minicomms, and hearing aids or even fax machines, Interpreters are humans. They have their own desires, weaknesses and strengths. Where the electrical equipment is concerned i.e. Minicom etc.; deaf people do not worry about their confidentiality, their skills or their training. They are just straight forward machines. It takes deaf people longer to get used to the idea of having an interpreter, developing trust and a better relationship.

There should be training for deaf people, about interpreters, how to use them, and how even to live with them in one community, without abusing, or taking advantage of them. The Service should start within the community, it seems to me Wessex have moved too early without establishing themselves sufficiently within the community.

Deaf people are not using the service as it was hoped they would. Perhaps Wessex can show large numbers of bookings, but on looking closely, it will be seen that it is mostly the same people who book the service over and over again.

There is still a large group of deaf people who have not seen an interpreter and do not know much about the service, never mind used one, or booked one.

There is still a lot more Wessex should do before it can claim that it has a great impact on the life of deaf people in Wessex.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusions**

Looking back at the information and data collected throughout the project, it is not easy to conclude the various topics as one. It is best if we conclude on each topics separately.

### **8.1 The Training Programme**

The Training which are provided at the Centre for Deaf studies since 1987, have come a long way, from experimental project to a successful and known interpreting course across the UK. To date some 200 students completed the training most of whom have found job in the field, although mostly outside Avon. Satisfaction by students has increased over the year. It is possibly the combination of both, knowing what to expect as well as standard of service by the Centre have improved. The Centre still relies on outside funding to run the course and there are still around 20 students each year on the course. Students arriving the course with more basic skills in Sign Language which in itself help to succeed in the course.

The Centre still faces equipment problems but this is the same situation across most Universities. Placements for students are organised better now, and students seems to benefit more from these placements. Sadly the hopeful links between the Centre and the Agency, never materialised, and the plan to have the students automatically moving on from the Centre to be employed as free lances even with the Agency never took place. Although on individual basis, this has happened occasionally.

The Centre is still one of the most recognise educational places to obtain interpreter training, it is now also possible to obtain a degree and not just a Diploma in Social Science – (Deaf Studies).

### **8.2 The Agency**

Although the links and contact between the Centre and the Agency have never got to the original plan and transition of students from the Centre to the Agency did not occur, the Centre never the less continued with its day to day work. The amount of users increased all the time, and RNID have open more and more Communication Support Unit across the country.

There are still many cancellation made by Deaf users as well as by the Agency when they cannot find an interpreter for a booking. With more and more interpreters spending time at educational setting, and in full time employment, there are less available interpreters for free lance jobs.

On the job training which provided by the agency, happened at a large scale nationwide once in a while, and when this happened, most of Deaf people across the county as well as other counties are in shortage of interpreters. The provision of interpreters not just by the agency but over all is far from sufficient and still not on par with other language interpreting.

The Agency did not managed to increase their publicity work in Deaf clubs and among various institution and by doing so limited the spreading knowledge and understanding about the work of the Agency.

The Agency still require the booking fee on top of the interpreters fee and expenses and by doing so make many deaf people and other bodies reluctant to book their interpreters via the Agency. Most of them will have their own contact directly with interpreter to book them directly avoiding the booking fee. There is no way of finding out exactly how many and how often interpreters are booked directly, unless a further research will take place.

By doing so we perhaps be able to measure the impact which the Agency have made on life of Deaf people in the County and surrounding counties.

### **8.3 The Interpreters**

Most of the interpreters who have taken part in the original study, have moved on. Very few of them remained in Avon. Some found job as full time interpreters or in house interpreters in various other institution. Some moved on to work for the BBC, some even left the profession of interpreting for a safe r full time employment.

The Centre for Deaf studies who originally contracted to the Agency to be provided with priority for interpreters have opted out to employ in-house full time interpreter. Interpreters who work as free lance are needed to maintain their own pension, tax books, VAT, and at times of illness no one pay them sick leave, same over holidays and public holiday. The amount of hours worked and at times very unsocial hours, can deter many from continuing with this profession.

Interpreters required frequent breaks and often demands that at least two interpreters present for each assignment if longer than two hours. This obviously push the cost of the initiative much higher, and a as result can deter organisers from booking interpreters for various events.

### **8.4 Deaf Users**

Deaf people are still somewhat reluctant from using an interpreter when it comes to personal and confidential information, i.e. court cases, divorce settlement, etc. Because the Deaf community is so small and almost every one know each other the fear that other deaf people will know about their incidents, deter them from using an interpreter and rather use a member of the family or exchange notes.

More and more Deaf people do however use interpreters for health reasons like hospital appointments, visiting the GP's etc. Many Deaf users now attend Theatre when a sign performance is staged. Deaf people still angry by the location of the Agency and many never use the Agency at all.

Many Deaf people still do not use an interpreter at all, even after 10 years since the project was set up. The situation is different with Deaf who are employed and relies on Access to Work to help them with interpreters. They seem to utilise the service to the full.

Deaf people who attend education setting, especially higher education often find themselves without interpreter especially because some days are more in demands than others and most interpreters in the area are either fully booked or just turned down the assignments for various reasons.

Deaf people nowadays are far better off in term of access to the hearing world, but the situation is still far from ideal.

The impact intended by the project, has not materialised. Have the community actually changed for the better? next chapter which discuss the situation today will try and answer this question.

### **8.5 Deaf Non Users**

It is difficult to try and conclude on something which has only been researched once. There is no way to find out how many Deaf people are there who have not yet used an interpreter. However, whereas before there were many who have not yet even seen an interpreter, it is only likely to assume that by now most of them have seen an interpreter. The TV coverage and exposure of Deaf people to real life facts, increase the knowledge of interpreting available.

Perhaps if we set up to research this group again, we may not find any, who have not been using interpreter at all. but we could also be wrong. Unless we set up to research that, it will be easy to conclude whether the project created any impact on that dimension.

### **8.6 Changing the Community**

If we are to sum the achievements of the project, there is a need to look again at the aim of the project at the beginning.

The Project had three main aims

- Setting up of training programme to train interpreters.
- Setting up an Agency to provide Interpreting Services.
- Evaluation of training programme and research on community effects.

All of these three component have been achieved fully and successfully. If we are to compare the situation now as it was before 1991, the community have definitely changed. Who thought then that Deaf people could attend signed tours of various galleries and museums? who thought that Deaf people could attend sign performances at the Theatre? How many wedding were there that deaf people could marry with the help of an interpreter? How many Deaf people could attend University before 1991?

So the community have definitely benefited from the project in existence. Only with the setting up of the training service and the provision of the Agency can we see the real need for this service. It is not ideal, it is not sufficient and there is a lot that can improve, but without this pioneering initiative we would never know the scope of the problems or in fact the scope of the changes that could occur.

## **Chapter 9: The situation today – a personal view**

Although this main data collection was completed more than five years ago, there is a great deal to be gained from considering the extended impact after a period of time. In many respects, the situation has not changed a great deal.

The training programme at CDS has continued to expand to provide a three year programme for undergraduate students with around 10 each year being graduated in the interpreter stream. Some difficulties surround the switch from centralised training to vocational qualifications which are largely accredited in the workplace itself. CACDP which assesses and registers interpreters has been changing its procedures and this has caused upheaval and some uncertainty.

Despite the training course and the need for many interpreters as a result of a concentration of deaf students in higher and further education in the City of Bristol, many interpreters have left the County in recent years. Many have taken up posts as full-time interpreters but a significant number have left the field. This is partly due to the stresses of the job and partly to the lack of career structure in this newly created profession. There is still a great shortage of male interpreters. It is common to see and hear a deaf man sign with a female voice.

A positive recent change in recent years is that there are more sources of financial support for the provision of interpreters eg Disabled Student Allowances. The Department for Employment also supports deaf people through the Access to Work Scheme. However, demands greatly exceeds supply, leading to frustration and some disillusion. There are too few trained interpreters to meet the needs with the result that less qualified, less experienced and less skilled practitioners are being called in to support deaf people. CACDP has altered its register levels in order to cope with this.

### **9.1 Financial Aspects**

There is some scepticism among deaf people about the motives of interpreters. There are fond recollections of interpreters working for the love of the job whereas at present there is a feeling that financial gain is more significant. It seems to be a only a “well-paid” (though insecure) job. There are various experiences which deaf people relate which seem to indicate this aspect:

“I remember an incident where I booked six interpreters for a week long project. It was verbally agreed that they will be paid the daily recommended fee and not hourly fee. It came to my knowledge that while on the project which enable them many hours of free time they were conspiring to send invoices claiming hourly fee using the fact that it was verbally agreed and not written contract. They talked and planned to support each other. I only happened to know about it because I was told that by two of the interpreters who have not felt comfortable to join the plot. The others however sent in invoices charging hourly rate which cost us a bomb.”

These experiences if re-told are not helpful to the profession of interpreters but have to be balanced against the commitment and professionalism of many others. The research reported

above tends to confirm the desire of interpreters to continuously improve on performance and to provide more effective service to deaf people.

One argument concerning the charging for interpreting is that it is seldom the user who has to pay. Neither hearing or deaf users in an interpreting situation are likely to pay directly for the interpreter. As a result, like a business man on expenses, the actual cost or charge or accuracy of the charge may seem less important than the fact that a services has been provided. This is probably short-sighted as the long term effect is to make the provision to deaf people more and more expensive to those administrators who have no understanding of the need and as a result the long term provision is put at risk.

If interpreters' fees are perceived to be high, it will deter institution and employers from using interpreters more readily. This situation may also influence the Government response to the campaign for recognition of BSL, if a financial assessment of the cost of recognition is made.

It is a classic situation of charges having to be made to cover periods when there is no interpreting assignment; whereas one might argue if costs were reduced there would be more use of interpreters.

## **9.2 Deaf decisions affecting opportunities**

Some years ago, the committee at Bristol Deaf club decided to exclude hearing people from attending on some evenings. The rationale was that there were the needs of Deaf people to enjoy the Deaf club to be taken into account and that these needs were affected by having hearing people (especially beginning signers) trying to interact. However, this contradicts the need for hearing people to learn sign language effectively and to experience deaf culture. This became a direct issue for those recent cohorts of interpreting trainees who were not able to attend the deaf club at all, as they felt they were not welcome. As a result their training was conducted in a "laboratory" setting.

## **9.3 Disempowerment by free service**

A step forward in one sense has been the provision of free service to the deaf person. This may be considered as similar to the TV Licence? For example, in Israel Deaf people are exempt from paying the TV licence, but this results in them not being able to campaign for better service and more subtitling access on TV – as all they receive is free. In the UK, Deaf people do pay a full licence fee and as a result feel confident in campaigning for access on TV.

If Deaf people have free service of interpreters, their scope for criticising and complaining or campaigning for better service is greatly reduced. There can be no refund or, exchange. If the person receives a bad deal, there is no automatic recourse. In fact, the deaf person may be forced through lack of interpreters to use exactly the same service again. If there were a system of vouchers for interpreting use, deaf people could hire the service they wanted, complain about it and perhaps receive compensation in hours from the agency. There is still a need to look at the whole service, compare with services in other countries and in other areas of application in order to determine the best service and how to achieve better quality.

#### **9.4 Disability Discrimination Act**

The new DDA has given Deaf people rights in regard to employment and services such as theatres, and cinema subtitling (not yet but hopefully soon). However, there is a need for deaf people to understand how to use the provisions of the Act and to work with the services in order to achieve their goals.

#### **9.6 Recognition of BSL**

There is also still a need to campaign for the recognition of BSL, because in order for the Government to finally recognise BSL as this will prove to be a spur to all service development. It should also increase the pressure to provide effective training.

## Chapter 10

### 10.1 Understanding Sign Language Interpreting

As a result of the training programme described in this report and the research on the deaf community and on interpreters themselves, a great deal more is understood about the priorities and the practices of interpreting. We are also much closer to developing an overall model of interpreting. In this chapter, as a way of summing up the effects of the ten years of this programme, we try to set out an initial description of the nature of interpreting in sign language.

#### 10.1.1 Sign Language Interpreting – preliminary

There is a good deal of intuitive knowledge about interpreting. In one sense, it is something we all do – understand and make sense of situations and events, whether they are language based or not. Our particular understanding here, is of a deliberate act of making sense of language based information and re-producing the meaning of that information in another language. The expectation of this process is that it happens inside one individual and for our purposes, one of the languages is signed.

We can overlay a more formal definition:

“The conscious process of altering an incoming message in a source language to a message in a target language while preserving the meaning.”

From an interpreter’s point of view, the task involves the transfer of meaning from one language to another in the presence of two or more monolingual users of different languages. This process should be completed using the form of language which the users would prefer if they were bilingual. It is obvious then, that an interpreter has to be functionally bilingual – that is be able to work on the meanings of the two language messages, in that domain of knowledge and within a specific context. Such a context could be medical or educational and the domain might be diagnosis, cancer, gynaecology or biology, history or geography.

Most people engage in all the processes used by an interpreter at some time in their lives but the interpreter is different in that he or she works in two languages at the same moment in time and within a specific (short) time frame. An interpreter may work in simultaneous mode (receiving the source at the same time as producing the target) or in consecutive (where the source is wholly received before producing the target). The first requires the interpreter to deal with interference problems while the latter requires the use of memory skills.

Translation in contrast while requiring the transfer of meaning is normally done out of this time frame and with considerable resources to hand – reference books, other texts examples and even consultation with the people who have generated the source. Most, but not all, translation is completed in written form. As yet, there has been little development of translation in sign language contexts. There is a potential in material which could be translated

and also in television work where there may be time for preparation. However, most tasks are completed by simultaneous interpretation.

## **10.2 Process and Product in Interpreting**

Once we begin to analyse the tasks the interpreter carries out, the more it becomes apparent that there is an internal process occurring. The description of such processes has become the domain of psychology where there is a large base of research on how humans function.

### **10.2.1 Cognition**

The most prominent resource is cognitive psychology which studies the thinking part of the person and has evolved models of how the person functions in carrying out tasks. Most general texts on psychology now set out the various aspects of the process which are internal and which allow the person (in our case, the interpreter) to make the transfer of meaning from one language to another. Interestingly, from all the studies which are carried out, we can see that all parts of the process are available to most people all of the time. As humans, we are continuously engaged in the task of dealing with information. Very little the interpreter does is unique to the task of interpreting, as such. Training for interpreters is therefore more about practising the component skills and making the trainee aware of what is to be achieved in the task.

### **10.2.2 Perception**

As a starting point, all incoming information has to be perceived – that is, registered and recognised. This information is crudely sensory – sound waves, light etc. What the perceptual system does is translate this crude information into a higher level of information and presents it to the other parts of the process. What is apparent is that this is not a one-way process. The perceptual system does not just pass on information but rather it has to organise according to what it already knows. Perceptual systems not only recognise, they also have to actively seek out information, in order to make sense of it. The eyes must search in the “right” place for the information. If the person is not aware of where and how to search for this, for example a beginning signer who looks at the deaf person’s hands, then the quality of the information received is poor.

### **10.2.3 Attention**

In carrying out the task of interpreting, the person is not in control of the stream of information. Unlike say, in reading, the person cannot look away and pause, deal with some other task and then return to the task. The stream of information is continuous and the effort involved in dealing with all parts of the message, is likely to be similar. That is, the person has to be continuously alert to all of the incoming message. The internal process of attention keeps the interpreter focused on the task and maintains the quality of information. Where attention wanes, performance drops. Attention is affected by tiredness, unfamiliarity and emotional factors.

#### **10.2.4 Memory**

Most researchers consider the use of the memory process to be the central part of the whole system. Most has been written about working memory and how it stores the auditory information in an articulatory code, prior to the extraction of grammatical meaning. The training of this part of the process is of considerable importance and it is this part which seems to be most affected by the simultaneous nature of the language processing. Interpreters need to be able to use their working memory effectively in the face of interference from the continuous stream of new information. Interpreters have to be trained to deal with this. Success in the task of holding the information about part of a sentence, while extracting grammar and meaning, but at the same time receiving new information, is something which tends to cause panic in the first instance and requires considerable practice to achieve success. A great deal of time in interpreter training is given over to evolving strategies for dealing with this aspect of the task.

#### **10.2.5 Language Processing**

The working memory system provides the data for a grammatical analysis of the message, which is usually available in phrases rather than whole sentences. The language process has therefore to blend together the sentence structure or when constructing sentences prior to producing the target message, impose the sentence structure in order to make sense of the message. We will explain a little more on language shortly.

#### **10.2.6 Semantic Memory**

When grammatical meaning is available, it is possible to examine the store of information – the person's world knowledge, facts, beliefs, expectations, attitudes – in order to understand the message. This part of the process is least well understood even though it is the heart of meaning system in the person. In terms of preparing for an assignment, it is this part of the system which is most involved. The interpreter has to study resource material in order to develop and to activate the knowledge in that area of memory. To work as an interpreter in a hospital setting, the interpreter would swot up on health issues, medical terminology in order to be able to retrieve that meaning when it occurs in interpreting.

### **10.3 Deep Process**

However, even more significant is the system which deals with deeper meaning. This combines an understanding of why the person is communicating and the fundamental meaning behind the words.

#### **10.3.1 Intention**

Significant to this construction of meaning, is what the original person intends in their utterance. At the start of the whole process, is an intention to communicate with other people – a question, a comment, a statement, an argument. The basic presumption is that this idea is intelligible and falls within the experience of the others who might listen. A further premise is that the other people structure their semantic knowledge in a similar way (they share the same cultural perspectives) and the effect of the message receipt and understanding will be the same.

Someone communicates a message and believes that others who receive it will accept it as an intention to provide some knowledge or comment. When languages are not shared between speaker and listener, then an interpreter is needed. This introduces another person's deep process into the communication. An interpreter working on this has to be aware that conveying the intention may be as significant as the words used to construct the meaning.

### **10.3.2 Meaning**

Meaning is the framing of the intention in a way which is considered logical and appropriate for the context. It is the part of the process which invokes the language. Once a person knows what they want to say, then they can construct the sentences. Most of the time, interpreters have to look behind the message to deal with the speaker's meaning.

"Will you close the door, please" is not a question in English, despite its structure. It is a command, even though it has the suffix, "please". The intention of the speaker is to achieve a state of having the door closed and indicating to the other person that this should be carried out by that other person. Meaning as it is created and stored deep within the system is likely to be totally abstract and unusable without the overlay of all the other process. It is very unlikely that interpreter training can alter the deep process and the structure of meaning but what it attempts to achieve is efficiency in the overall process.

## **10.4 Language**

Not surprisingly, the topic of language has been the most prominent in the discussion about the development of interpreting. Interpreters have to be able to use BSL effectively. Deaf people in assessing an interpreter look at the quality of the signing produced by the interpreter. It is usually not possible for a deaf viewer to know exactly what is the source (since it is spoken and in sound) and so the most likely quality to be valued is clear and well structured signing. BSL training is a high priority. Continued contact and improvement in sign language knowledge has to be a goal for all interpreters.

### **10.4.1 Language in – Source**

In the early stages of interpreter training, it was widely perceived that the major task was to take information from English and make it accessible to deaf people. Perhaps 90% of all interpreting consisted of an interpreter producing sign language in response to a native English speaker. It was commonly believed that this task was easier than the opposite. The interpreters were comfortable with the native tongue and were able to present structures in the second language. It has become much more complex since that time, for the reason that deaf people have begun to question the interpreter's competence in sign language. When that happens, the deaf person also becomes anxious about the target in speech, when it is the deaf person who signs the source message. The process may feel as if it is out of the hands of the deaf person and so there is a suspicion that the message is not getting across.

### **10.4.2 Language Out – Target**

What becomes clear is that the message which is produced by the interpreter has to be monitored and corrected if it deviates from the planned message or if it begins to be nonsense as can occur when the interpreter is under pressure or does not understand the source.

With that realisation it becomes obvious that we need to dig more deeply into language structures, grammars and the functioning of both languages, when we carry out interpreter training. Interpreters need to know about speaking and about signing but at a level which allows them to function effectively in the languages.

## **10.5 The Person**

Despite the perception which builds up in the application of the cognitive model, the interpreter is not a machine and has to be understood also as a person and a member of a community.

### **10.5.1 The position of the interpreter in a community**

All through the training and development of the interpreter, it is important to understand the community and cultural allegiance of the interpreter. It affects the performance and also the perception of the performance. Since few interpreters are members of the deaf community, the situation in the deafness field is more significant.

### **10.5.2 Regarding the Deaf Community**

The substance of this report concerns the nature of the practice of interpreting and the response of deaf people. From the previous chapters, we can see some of the problems which they have encountered. Deaf people may have had higher expectations than could be realised or may have had insufficient opportunity to understand the whole of the interpreting process and as a result, may not be aware of the complexity of the task which interpreters have to face. Although there has been great progress, as can be seen from the personal view of chapter 9, there remains a great deal to be done. Deaf people probably do not consider interpreters as part of the community. They do not have a sense of ownership of interpreting and consequently are suspicious of motives and outcomes. Deaf people are conscious of the power which they did not have in the past and reluctant to give away the power of their own language to others, especially to hearing people (who in the past were not prepared to recognise that language). Understanding deaf people's sensitivities is a major task for interpreters. It needs to be brought into interpreter training more centrally. None of the training programmes that exist have done this so far.

### **10.5.3 Regarding the Hearing Community**

Most significant is that the hearing community views interpreters as within the community and as a designated sub system. It sees interpreters as hearing people, caring for deaf people. When a society advances sufficiently to provide education to deaf children, begins to see them as intellectually able, the society can begin to conceptualise the needs in terms of access. As an enlightened society, it can delegate specific members to deal with the issues. At first it was

social workers, now it is interpreters. In order for the provisions of society to be made, such persons need training and in doing so will become professionals. When professionals are qualified and registered then their competence is established and society sees the problems as solved. At this time, hearing people believe that deaf people have the best possible provision for their needs. However, because of the nature of the service view, it is measurable in financial terms.

At the same time, the level of quality checks on the act of interpreting is low, since society perceives the registration and training process as the determining factor (as it does with other professions).

#### **10.5.4 Regarding the Community of interpreters**

As the numbers of interpreters increase, there is a need to create, and a natural pressure for, an association of interpreters which has both a professional and social role. The professional role is at the community level as well as at the individual level. The social role is essential to dissipate the pressures and problems which are encountered in the stressful task of interpreting.

### **10.6 As a Person**

We can probe further in considering the interpreter as an individual with his or her own unique path towards interpreting.

#### **10.6.1 Socialisation and Growth**

Almost all of the interpreters working in the UK have been brought up in a hearing family and have come to sign language and the deaf community late. Even where a person grows up in a deaf family, the dominance of the hearing-speaking culture may ensure that by the time the child attends school, he or she has become fully socialised into the hearing community. Most interpreters are therefore members of the hearing community in attitude and belief and functioning.

#### **10.6.2 Personality and Characteristics**

An interpreter in sign language is always visible. Unlike a spoken language interpreter or translator, where they may be no contact with the participants in the interaction, sign language interpreters have to be watched by deaf people and are usually visible to the hearing as well. This demands a person who is comfortable in the public eye, who is prepared to perform and who is able to deal with the direct (negative, if the person does not understand), visual feedback which may occur.

#### **10.6.3 Obstacles and Issues**

A range of factors to do with the personal circumstances of the interpreter affect the interpreting situation. Emotional involvement (more significant since the deaf community is small), attitudinal involvement (sensitive topics), lack of technical knowledge, lack of preparation, are simple examples of the problems which may affect the performance. Many of these have been mentioned in the report.

## **10.7 Provider**

As indicated earlier, hearing society perceives interpreting as a service sub-systems of society and the task of interpreting is seen within the contracting world as something provided to deaf people.

### **10.7.1 Agency**

The growth of agencies for sign language interpreting mirrors the developments in spoken language interpreting and written translation agencies. They offer one means of career development. However, as we have indicated in the report they are the source of concern for interpreters and for deaf people. We do not know at this time whether spoken language interpreters have the same concerns about their agencies.

### **10.7.2 Location and Practice**

Services have to be delivered to specific locations at specific times and the way in which interpreting has to be presented in a range of locations has to be understood. Although training tends to take place in laboratory settings, interpreters work in the field – where conditions, timing, people's attitudes and topics may all work against good performance.

### **10.7.3 The need for a Manual**

One necessity for this field is the provision of information to deaf and hearing people about what is to be achieved in interpreting and what its limitations are. One of the missing components in the development is a clear explanation to all parties – hearing and deaf – about what interpreting is and how all the above factors interact to inhibit maximum performance. Such a manual would be helpful immediately.

### **10.7.4 Ethics and Codes**

What becomes clear from the analysis of the provision aspect of interpreting is that we need to understand the rights of the individuals concerned in terms of privacy, security and quality of service. Once a service model is assumed it requires a charter of performance and rights of which the user can be assured. Ethics in sign language interpreting remain an area of concern because deaf people are a minority at risk and the interpreters are both the service providers and the communication channel for deaf people to complain or to express their concerns. Codes of practice have to be extensive if interpreting is to work. They are not as yet as well developed as they need to be.

## **10.8 Futures**

Sign language interpreting is still in its infancy and it will progress in many ways. It is to be hoped that training will improve in scope and that its impact on the community will be considerable. It is to be hoped that this report will help in that respect. The type and content of interpreting will change as will the locations in which interpreting occurs.

### **10.8.1 Practices – Videophone and Relay Interpreting**

New forms of interpreting are not just on the horizon, but already here. ISDN-based videophones are now relatively common and are about to become much cheaper in cost. The possibilities for remote interpreting where the interpreter does not have to travel are real. The deaf person can call an interpreting service and ask the interpreter to make a voice call to a designated hearing person. Cost is much less, even though the cost per minute is greater, because there is no minimum two hour charge and there is no travel cost for the interpreter. There is great potential for this development, but it will also create new issues such as security and privacy.

## **10.9 In Conclusion**

This project was termed “Changing the Community” at the outset. It has proved quite close to the truth. One might argue that the community was changing anyway and this would be hard to deny but the commitment to creating an interpreter service has been a very important aspect of the development which has taken place in the last ten years.

The training system was not perfect and it continues to evolve. It has become stronger and it is embedded in a more valued degree programme. There are new possibilities to offer the advanced training which the interpreters themselves in this report have requested. There is the possibility to provide the insights to deaf people, to create a video manual of interpreting and even to train deaf people as interpreters and translators.

Great deal remains to be done but we can move forward more confidently in the light of this research and of the experiences and insights provided by staff students, interpreters and deaf people.

## **References**

To go in here

## **Appendix 1: Training Interpreters from Other Countries**

### A1.1 Across the Barriers: Training Sign Language Interpreters in the EC

0: Background and Rationale for the Project

#### **0.1: Research as a starting point**

When Jones and Pullen (1987) completed their survey of deaf people, they had interviewed 217 deaf people from all the countries of the EC, except Luxembourg. They discovered, as we might predict, that deaf people were unable to access the training programmes which were offered generally, and no others, more suited to their language and culture, had been devised. In a Europe moving towards extended training and professional development, deaf people were left behind. This compounded the already difficult situation where deaf people were under-employed in all countries.

#### **0.2 The Image of Deafness**

A prime reason for this problem within our society has been our image of deafness. This has been drawn from a picture of normality which has been driven by a medico-educational model which sees deaf people as deviant. Because of this they are also disabled. It is the function of the educational and medical professions to make deaf people as like hearing people as possible. This is glossed in many ways as maximising potential, integration and so on, but it is a means of normalisation which imprints a model of failure on the deaf

person - a model which devalues the skills and language which he or she possesses.

#### **0.3 An Alternative View**

This type of view is no longer acceptable. As deaf communities become more aware of their capabilities; as linguists become more interested in the language of deaf people; as parents begin to question the limited opportunities available; so a new image of deafness is appearing. In this view, deaf people are competent users of a sign language; are members of a group which expresses culture and cohesion. For many in society, the abilities of deaf people in a visual modality are now of considerable interest. To offer training to deaf people is now possible when we ensure four conditions:

- communication compatibility
- use of existing knowledge
- acknowledgement of identity
- creation of the confidence for integration.

In our networks for training in the EC we have adopted these principles.

#### **0.4 Interpreting: A Key**

The position of deaf people is worsened by the lack of interpreters. Sign language interpreters act as the key to the labour market and training at the appropriate level for deaf people. As Woll (1989) discovered there is very little systematic training in sign interpreting anywhere in the EC. There is no recognised qualification and no accredited course for these key workers. As the possibilities for mobility increase, these sign interpreters will need a range of

community spoken languages as well as sign languages.

### 0.5 Transnationality

A key feature of European-wide training has to be the extent to which it is transnational. This is rather more than co-operative across national boundaries, that is, it involves more than national initiatives which are shared. From our point of view, transnationality requires the training alongside partners in other states.

Surprisingly, deaf people are true Europeans in language and communication. Unlike spoken language users deaf people are able to cross language boundaries easily. This offers the possibility of training in *Eurosign* - a naturally emerging international sign communication. For the first time, direct training can be offered. Deaf people can and do study alongside one another in the programme described below.

### 0.6 Research Base

Although these developments have become possible with a UK base, much has relied on the research infrastructure which over the last 15 years has supplied the data on which to build the training programmes. When Tervoort (1983) surveyed education and sign language throughout Europe he discovered a critical link between developments and the existence of sign language research. Where this link involved deaf people directly, the process was made more effective. Training comes from research and the two are not easily separated.

### 0.7 Transfer of Training

A crucial parameter of the training initiative is the transfer of training. Where the research has not existed, where there is no higher education base for such work or where deaf people are only in the initial stages of development, a model which combines elements of the training and research is essential. The key aspect of our training is that it ensures the identification of a higher education institution to which the training process will be transferred. The training therefore ensures that deaf people will develop in conjunction with an institution in the country of origin. Training is therefore shared by Bristol and the host institution. Creating such a base is vital to longer term development.

### 0.8: Implications

Deaf people can be shown to have intelligence equivalent to that of hearing people. Yet since the beginning of the EC they have lagged behind in every economic, educational and employment statistic. Deaf people have their own language and culture which within a European context can be a positive asset. If the positive aspects of deaf people's lives and competence are to be utilised there is a need for a widespread development of interpreting services. Such interpreting services have been the key to the functioning of the EC itself. This project has taken the first steps towards a European wide training programme for interpreters of sign language and has been successful in training the first cohorts of sign interpreters in the UK, Ireland and Portugal.

### References

Jones L and Pullen G (1987) *Inside we are all equal: A Social Policy Survey of the EC*. London: ECRS

Tervoort B (1983) A Survey of Sign Language in Europe in Kyle J G and Woll B (eds) *Language in Sign*. London: Croom Helm

Woll B (1989) *A Survey of Interpreter Training in the EC*. Bristol: Centre for Deaf Studies.

**1.0: Transnationality**

There is a major distinction between multinational participation and transnationality. In our definition of transnationality, participants must work alongside one another, exchanging culture, language and experience. Training must be provided both in a single central location and in distributed locations throughout the EC. The training programmes must be equivalent in their delivery but adapted to the unique features of each national system.

**1.1.1: Partners:**

The project began with three partners - Ireland, Portugal and UK. Greece latterly joined and worked through the planning for interpreter training but participated only in training through a linked HORIZON project (916). Contact with other groups created a great deal of interest and from the experience of other projects within the EC, we believe the optimum number of partners to be 4-5. This allows the maximum amount of cross-cultural exchange and also allows the detailed monitoring which was necessary in the delivery of the training programmes.

Partners were identified within the deaf field through our existing network of contacts. As a Centre which has been active in deafness research and training for 15 years we are known to associations and organisations.

**1.1.2: Workplan**

The transnational model used involves extended training in the UK and in the home country, in the form identified below (Table 1).

*Table 1: Project schedule for trainees(1992-4)*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<i>(T-4 months)</i>	<i>Recruitment(Home base, Bristol involved in interview and selection)</i>
<i>(T-1 month)</i>	<i>Preparation (Home base)</i>
<i>(T-1 week)</i>	<i>Pre-sessional Orientation (Bristol - all trainees together, n=30)</i>
<i>(month 1-3)</i>	<i>A: Modular Training(Bristol, 10 weeks, assessments on each module)</i>
<i>(month 4-6)</i>	<i>B: Modular training(Home base, UK trainees stay in Bristol, 10 weeks, assessments)</i>
<i>(month 7-9; 13-15)</i>	<i>C/D: Modular training(Bristol, 2x10 weeks, assessments)</i>
<i>(month 16-18; 19-21)</i>	<i>E/F: Modular training (Home base, 2x10 weeks, assessments)</i>
<i>month 22-24)</i>	<i>(Overall assessment through joint examining, qualification issued from Bristol, trainee survey)</i>

In order to achieve this programme, considerable negotiation and direct contact and training was necessary (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Meetings and visits - to and from Bristol (person-visits, trips in brackets)

Partner	No. of visits to Partner	No. of visits from Partner
Portugal	9(6)	
Eire	16(10)	
Greece	3(2)	

The extent of these visits was a major factor contributing to the success because problems which arose could be dealt with more quickly and cultural differences could be better understood.

#### 1.1.4: Trainee Feedback

In order to determine the degree of success in the transnational aspects of the project, we carried out a survey of all those who participated - trainers and trainees. This was done after the project period in April 1994.

Results(from 22 respondents) indicate considerable impact of the training programme. Seventy percent of respondents claim to be now in permanent employment. The reaction to questions on the effectiveness of the training included: 77% felt that it had helped a lot in the present job, 89% had felt it had helped a lot in job possibilities and 95% felt it had helped a lot in general knowledge. No one reported that the training had not helped.

A particular component was the transnational aspect. Eighty-nine percent felt that it had helped that there were also trainees from other countries. Seventy percent thought it was important to train in

more than one country while all respondents would be prepared to return to Bristol for more training. All thought that others should have the same opportunities to train in this way. Only 45% said accommodation was available upon arrival but this was because accommodation was not provided automatically to British trainees. 5(3)

On the particular characteristics of the course, 100% thought it was very important to have training from the deaf tutors, 81% felt it important that the training was located within the Centre for Deaf Studies (rather than integrated with the whole institution) and 100% welcomed the seminars which were arranged in addition to the training time.

On the question of certification, only 50% thought the Certification led to a higher salary nor did they feel that the study itself led to higher pay. However, 91% thought it was important that they received a Certificate from the University.

Each trainee was paid a grant or allowance for the period of training. There were varying levels of satisfaction, with only 70% claiming it was enough to pay for food (a proportion had to take additional jobs), 50% that it was enough to travel to the Centre and even 40% did not think it was enough to travel home. Two significant points were that the allowance was not enough to pay for books and materials (53%) and 95% thought it was insufficient if travel to another country was planned.

Taken together these confirm the effectiveness of the project in bringing together a group of trainees and fulfilling many of the their training needs. The programme is unique in mixing the

different trainees from different countries and this has proved to be very successful.

Transnationality is both present and functioning very successfully.

### 1.1.5 Outcomes

There have been major advances in the training opportunities for interpreters as a result of the training programmes. As well as raising awareness and providing direct training, courses have been transferred and expertise has been made available to these partners through identified institutions of higher education.

It is intended that the work will continue in Bristol for the foreseeable future and it is envisaged that there will be continuing cooperation with all partners. However, funding limitations in each partner country makes the long term future less certain. The advantage is however, that the expertise is now available.

## 1.2 Transfer of Expertise

The principal components of the training courses which had to be transferred were curricula, delivery, assessment and placement procedures. The needs of partners were analysed internally before the project began and the pattern of interchange was established throughout the time of the project. Established resources in the partner countries were the sign language of deaf people and the educational framework for training in legal, educational and social matters. What has been added to this expertise has been an educational administration.

Transfer of training was achieved by specifying the model and content of the

training programme, by ensuring the participation of the partners in this process at all levels. Partners took part in Course Board meetings, engaged in planning with staff in Bristol and were supported on site in their adaptations of the course. A model was offered and then supported and validated from Bristol.

Most of the activity involved a north-south transfer, but trainees from Bristol were also placed in Ireland and in Portugal.

In order to ensure the adequate transfer of expertise, it is necessary to identify not only course content, assessment procedures and administration, but to define in some detail the *expertise of the staff who provide this training* in the model. In future projects we would provide a deeper description of the conduct of the training courses to include this level of detail.

## 1.3: Innovation

Aspects of the innovation are described in the preliminary section. Primary among these has been the acceptance of the deaf person's contribution to society as the starting point. The training of the interpreters is then embedded not in a helping or caring context but in an *access and enabling framework*. Interpreters trained in the programme and the trainers, have now a greater understanding of roles and practices.

This was the first time that interpreters from different countries with different sign languages were trained alongside each other. This was the first time that deaf and hearing trainers worked together across national sign language boundaries. The model was unique with part training in

home country and the other component in Bristol.

#### **1.4: Multiplier Effect**

The very nature of the interpreter's role means that there is an immediate multiplication of effect. A fully qualified interpreter can work up to 20 hours within a full-time interpreting post. This figure allows for preparation time, but we are currently researching the interpreter's work pattern. In these 20 hours the interpreter will be in contact with individuals and groups. We estimate a contact rate of 40 deaf people in a week. If we train 30 interpreters we have an impact on 1200 deaf people in a single week. In the UK we estimate the need (evidence given to the national committee on interpreting) as 10 hours per week per deaf person. To reach this provision we would need to have 250 interpreters full-time. There are currently around 60, 80 with those trained in Bristol. There is still some way to go and the comments of the trainees that others should have the same opportunity as they had to train in Bristol, is reassuring and indicative of the need.

Transnationally, the same multiplier applies. Interpreters play a vital role in ensuring deaf people's participation.

In the area of the transfer of training, the facility now exist in Dublin and Lisbon to offer training for more interpreters. The staff are now available and the course can be easily extended in the home base. Potential exists for a massive effect. The later joining partner, Greece has not been able to develop as far as no interpreters entered the programme at this point due to reduced levels of funding; however, the

curriculum discussions and the pattern of working were shared with the Greek partner and they participated in the linked project (916).

##### **1.4.1: Training of trainers**

Clearly there has been a major development in the transfer of training and the fact that the partners were able to deliver training over a 30 week period when none had existed prior to 1992, shows the effect of the training for trainers component. This was carried out by direct instruction on curriculum and by demonstration of materials, method and assessment. This occurred at various times throughout the project both in Bristol and in the partner's home base.

##### **1.4.2: Effect on the Organisation**

The project has had a significant impact on the working of the Centre for Deaf Studies as it has become clear that training for hearing interpreters by deaf and hearing trainers is a feasible objective which can have measured outcomes. The Centre has made great progress through this transnational application in the deafness field. It is obvious that future training programmes can and should work on a European-wide basis and this will be the goal of the Centre.

#### **1.5: Open and Distance Learning**

A feature of the sign teaching component of the Centre's work has been the use of a CD-based interactive computer system for the teaching of sign language. This system allows the student to watch various models of sign but the computer can capture their own attempts and display these alongside the model to give the feedback necessary

for learning. This system was available and used by the UK trainees throughout the period of training.

In addition, some progress has been made in specifying which components of the training can be transferred to a distance teaching mode. We have begun work on multimedia applications and it is hoped that some of the modular components of this project will be transferred to a distance format.

### **1.6 Other EC Programmes**

The main aim of the project in respect of other EC programmes is to bring the training of interpreters into line with training in all other professional fields in the EC and to offer the same opportunities. This means extending the programme to a 90 week course and linking it with ERASMUS. This will allow the continuation of the transnational aspect of the work and bring greater recognition of the work of the trainees. We have already begun work on this and there is an embryonic trainers network now in existence for this field under ERASMUS.

## **2.0 HORIZON Objectives**

In all respects we believe we have met the HORIZON objectives. We have devised and delivered a transnational training programme, transferred it to partner countries and have in doing so trained the first cohorts of sign language interpreters. They will be of considerable importance in the deaf community.

Section 1.1.4 contains the results of our trainee feedback research and indicates the

success in reaching the job market and how the training has helped in this.

Trainees were graded on each piece of work submitted to provide measured performance on 24 modules. Of the work submitted by UK trainees (162 assignments), 23% were grade A (70%+), 36% were grade B (60-69%), 30% were grade C (50-59%) and 11% were grade D (40-49%). All of these are considered pass marks and contribute to completion of the qualification. This shows an above average distribution of grade results. There is a performance improvement throughout the course, although module assessment is at a higher level in the second year of work. All students also completed a range of practical placements.

The qualifications obtained are Certificate in Social Sciences(Deaf Studies) and Diploma in Social Sciences(Deaf Studies). The most recent participants have taken Diploma of Higher Education(Deaf Studies). Interpreting has an impact in all occupational sectors as deaf people have the need for interpreting in all areas of employment. Interpreting is classed as category C - professional - because of the code of ethics which must be adhered to and the length of training.

## **3.0 Administration**

The way in which the programme is set up means that there are different deadlines for submission by the different partners and there are different rules applying in the different countries. Misunderstandings arose because of the differing structures in participant countries and because of the turnover of staff responsible for the programme in Greece and Portugal.

Site visits are of value in supporting the work of the project team. Meetings of participants in similar projects would be a helpful national initiative but it would have to be sponsored by HORIZON centrally as participants could not predict costs prior to approval.

## Appendix 2: The Interview Schedules

A2.1: Interpreter Questionnaire - survey

A2.2: Interpreter Interview

A2.3: Deaf Users Interview

A2.4: Deaf Non-Users Interview

### Appendix 2a: The Research Plan 1993-5

[ This is included here only as a reference - it is not expected that it will be included in the final report in this form ]

The first phase of the project wholly concerned the training of interpreting students. The second phase has a number of elements:

1. Evaluation of the interpreter training course.
2. Analysis of the Wessex Agency and its work in relation to the trained interpreters.
3. Examination of interpreting provision in terms of
  - (a) interpreters' views and their performance
  - (b) deaf users: their views and engagement with interpreters
  - (c) hearing users: individual and corporate.

Phase 2 and 3 have a limited budget but will be functioning from January 1994 until August 1995.

Timetable

Numbers refer to the elements above

1994				1995		
Jan	April	July	Oct	Jan	April	July
1 (Feb)	1	-	-	1	-	-
2	2(Apr)	-	-	-	2	-
	3a	3a	3a		3a	
	3b	3b	3b	-	3b	3b
		3c	3c		3c	3c
Interim Report						Report

Steering Group meetings

3 March 1994                      July 1994                      Nov 1994                      Feb 1995                      July 1995

**Chair:** Vinod Kumar (RNID)

**Membership** (Mar 1994): Chair, J. G. Kyle, E Norrman, S. Bateman, B. Campbell (external interpreter) S. Hetherington (deaf user) plus another deaf user.

**Researcher:** Eva Fielding-Jackson

<b>Project hours:</b>	45 per month	Jan/Feb/March
		May/June/July
		Sept/Oct/Nov
	22½ per month	April/Dec
	0 per month	August

### Work plan and Methodology

(1) Analysis of existing materials in the interpreting course to July 1993 (the period of training in the project). To be completed February 1994 (ie this report)

Materials to be incorporated:

- (a) Course circular and lecturer's notes
- (b) As part of the course development, an internationally known interpreter from the WFD, Raili Ojala, spent 3 months with the course team. During this time she collated student responses to the course, and had extensive interviews with staff. In addition, she convened a 'Think Tank' meetings, involving practicing interpreters in the UK, with a brief to discuss interpreting needs and developments.
- (c) Report by Raili Ojala - involving student feedback

Outcome

Report prepared by the researcher will be combined with a budget statement and progress review of programme (1991-93) prepared by Kyle. This will be sent to Nuffield Foundation as an interim report.

(2) Analysis of Wessex Agency:

There are a number of components and actions:

Its components:

- (i) History of Wessex Agency
- (ii) Current working arrangements - management
- (iii) Functioning of agency - interpreter booking, monitoring, etc.
- (iv) Planned developments

Actions:

- (a) Discussions with director and other staff
- (b) Access to relevant files. (To be agreed by Wessex according to proposed requirements of this part of the study.)
- (c) Observation of agency in action.

Outcome: Report by April 1994; January 1995 and July 1995. (The first two are designed to illustrate progress).

3. Examination of Interpreter Provision

There are three parts: each has its own components, actions and methodology.

- (a) Interpreters: This has two parts - interpreters' views and interpreter performance.

Components:

- (i) Expectations of relationships with interpreters.
- (ii) Interpreter performance in a range of tasks.

Actions:

- (i) Interviews with sample of interpreters used by Wessex
- (ii) Questionnaire and monitoring forms with interpreters
- (iii) Observation and analysis of interpreting performance.

**Methods:**

- (i) Designed and piloted interview with sample of interpreters used by Wessex
- (ii) Designed and piloted questionnaire distributed to all Wessex interpreters
- (iii) Identification of categories of interpreting assignments - attendance at these and completion of observations scheduled, designed in Centre.
- (iv) Video recording of selected interpreting assignments - analysis by method devised in the Centre for Deaf Studies.

- (b) and (c) Deaf and Hearing Users

The methodology here is very similar and will be dealt with under the same heading. The main purpose is to describe interpreting provision and performance from the user perspective. Two groups of deaf and hearing users are involved. Firstly, those who have direct dealings with Wessex (i.e. booking interpreters) and secondly, those who have experienced Wessex interpreting but have had no direct role in engaging Wessex.

Components:

- (i) Expressed attitudes to and experiences with the agency and the interpreters on task.
- (ii) Knowledge of interpreting provision.
- (iii) Understanding of interpreting.

Actions:

- (i) Interviews with users on a sampled basis
- (ii) Questionnaires to other users
- (iii) Telephone interviews with non-users on their level of awareness of interpreting services.

Methods:

- (i) Construction of interview schedule, pilot work towards agreed schedule.
- (ii) Circulation of questionnaire on use 0 care to be taken to make this accessible to deaf user.
- (iii) Telephone contact with institutions.

Anticipated Outcomes

Interpreting is a new and vital service for deaf people. We can expect some uncertainty and some mistakes as we move towards an effective provision. As the interpreting provision improves, so will the access possibilities for deaf people. We expect to be able to detect this change in outlook and opportunity in deaf people. We will hope to describe the greater contribution which deaf people can make to society.

Appendix 2: nowhere in the report mentioned.

Appendix 3: The questionnaire

Appendix 4: The letter sent by Wessex

Appendix 5: The picture boy kick girl