

ACCESSIBLE EVALUATION: CASE STUDY 2

In October 2017 we, [Living Options Devon](#) were awarded funding from Sport England's Volunteer Opportunities fund to deliver the Deaf Get Active and Volunteer project, working in partnership with [Active Devon](#).



Deaf Get Active and Volunteer aims to work with Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users and physical activity providers to offer accessible opportunities for Deaf people to take part and volunteer in physical activity. To achieve this, the project is training volunteers, who are Deaf, as Activity Champions who will encourage more Deaf people to be active and volunteer. It is also training and deploying volunteer Deaf coaches to deliver coaching across Devon. As well as sporting opportunities, volunteers will also have access to other roles, such as video production and social media, to encourage more Deaf people to volunteer.



As part of the funding, Sport England requires Living Options Devon to evaluate our project locally, and contribute to a national evaluation process so they can understand what impact the funds are having on volunteers and the communities they are engaging.

There are three elements to the national evaluation process:

- 1 Registration Survey for all volunteers to complete when they join
- 2 'Experience Survey' for all volunteers to complete every six months
- 3 Volunteer Tracking System for recording volunteer hours

The Deaf Get Active & Volunteer project team faced the challenge of ensuring these tools were accessible for our Deaf volunteers. As an organisation working with disabled and Deaf people, it is vital that we ensure all aspects of Living Options Devon's services, including evaluation, are inclusive and fully accessible.



The Steering Group (which includes Deaf people) and the project team reviewed the surveys, and concluded that in their standard format they could present a barrier to Deaf BSL users getting involved and volunteering. BSL is a visual gestural language with a distinctive grammatical structure and syntax. It is not dependent or strongly related to spoken or written English. For many Deaf BSL users, spoken and/or written English is their second or even third language. While some of our volunteers may be fully bilingual with BSL/English and able to complete the surveys independently, this would not be possible for the majority.



Our initial solution was for our project manager and project administrator (both BSL users) to offer face-to-face support to help our volunteers complete the forms. However, it became clear that this wouldn't be sustainable once we had recruited more volunteers. So, the project team produced an 'Easy Read' Deaf-friendly version of both surveys, using images and Deaf-friendly language. The Registration Survey was trialled at an induction session for volunteers, which highlighted some issues. For example, many of the questions had to be answered using a horizontal 1-10 scale, but feedback from the group showed that a vertical scale would make more sense for Deaf people.

At this point we spoke with Sport England to understand their expectations for the evaluation and discuss how we might adapt the survey further. And we sought the views of [UK Deaf Sport](#), who provided expert advice. Based on this guidance, and on a shared principle of putting the volunteers first, we further modified our Easy Read surveys to address all of the issues that had been raised.



Our final versions of the surveys are now in use and appear to be effective. We are still able to provide face-to-face support to complete the surveys but so far this has not been necessary. We have also considered filming some BSL clips to accompany the surveys and support understanding, but at this stage the adapted surveys are working well.

The project team also reviewed the Volunteer Tracking System and introduced a range of tools to make it easier for volunteers to record and submit their volunteering hours. This included Easy Read timesheets, online forms, text messages, Facebook and email. We are now using a combination of these methods, which is working well, but we continue to look for alternative and less time-consuming methods.

By working together with the Deaf community, our partner organisations and our funder, we achieved an accessible evaluation that places the volunteer's experience at the heart and collects valuable data about the impact of our project.

You can click on this [link to see some of the questions](#) in the original and adapted survey and compare the two.



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March 2019