

## Use of signs

If a child has a hearing loss their parents may wish to communicate with them using a sign language. Sign languages are visual languages using the hands, face and body - they are different from spoken languages and have their own linguistic structure. British Sign Language (BSL) is the language of the UK's Deaf community, who often describe themselves as Deaf with a capital D to emphasise their deaf identity. Deaf children who are exposed to a sign language like BSL from a young age can acquire the language following very similar language milestones as hearing children who learn a spoken language.

Many children will be fitted with hearing aids or cochlear implants soon after they are identified as deaf, giving them the potential opportunity to develop spoken language. However, using sign language can help with understanding speech and can also be particularly useful at times when a deaf child is not using hearing aids or cochlear implants. Some deaf children may stop using sign language as their spoken language develops. However, for many deaf children sign language remains their primary means of communicating, or it retains an important role in their lives. The NDCS have a range of [family support resources for accessing BSL](#),

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