



Royal Association for Deaf people

Press Release

16 March 2017

For immediate release:

Dawn Butler MP calls for BSL Act

The Royal Association for Deaf people was delighted to see Dawn Butler (MP for [Brent Central](#)) raise a question in sign language in Parliament today. Ms Butler asked the Government to introduce the British Sign Language (BSL) Act to give BSL full legal status. In England BSL was recognised as an official minority language in 2003 but government recognition has not led to any new legal rights for BSL users. Ms Butler's question will help to raise awareness about the lack of accessible information for Deaf people and encourage Parliament to consider the importance of a BSL Act.

Being Deaf can be extremely isolating; everyday tasks can be a challenge. A BSL Act has the potential to make a difference to Deaf people. It could mean Deaf people have true equality of access for the first time in history. It could ensure that people who provide services have to think about how accessible their information is to Deaf people.

The Royal Association for Deaf people has been delivering services in a Deaf person's first language for over 175 years. We also support mainstream providers to be more accessible to Deaf people. We believe that working with Deaf people we can develop a better, more accessible future.

Dr Jan Sheldon, CEO of The Royal Association for Deaf people said that 'Ms Butler's question today should at the very least prick the conscience of our Government. In 2003 Deaf people were delighted that BSL had been recognised; they thought this would make a difference to their lives; sadly this has not been the case. BSL is an important indigenous language that should not only be recognised but its use encouraged through legislation. Only then will Deaf people stand any chance of equality of access'.

Note to Editors

- Video of Dawn Butler MP raising a question in sign language in Parliament:
<https://www.facebook.com/DawnButlerBrent/videos/vb.414773028678016/759873557501293/?type=3&theater>
- Founded in 1841, the Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD) promotes equality for Deaf people through the provision of accessible services, including: information, advice and guidance on topics such as welfare benefits, housing, employment, debt, tax and dispute resolution; advocacy services; communication support and awareness training; social activities for children, families and young people; support and advice on life skills; employability services including one-to-one support, workshops, job clubs and employer training; BSL translation; and person-centred community support.
- For more details on how RAD supports Deaf people of all ages, please visit www.royaldeaf.org.uk.