

PRESS RELEASE



SignHealth
The Healthcare Charity for Deaf People

BEACONSFIELD BASED CHARITY WINS TECHNOLOGY AWARD

SignTranslate, a subsidiary of SignHealth, the national healthcare charity for Deaf people based in Baring Road, Beaconsfield has been chosen to receive a BT sponsored award for the most innovative product through a competition dedicated to highlighting and rewarding the bright ideas of information and communications technology professionals in UK healthcare. The e-Health Insider award was presented in recognition of the charity's ground breaking translation program aimed at improving communications for Deaf people in Hospitals.

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Shocking evidence that profoundly Deaf patients struggle to communicate when they're face to face with health professionals spurred SignHealth in 2006 to launch a new web-based program, SignTranslate, initially aimed at GP surgeries. The program has now been extended to be used in Hospitals.

The program translates over 500 medical questions into British Sign Language (BSL) using short video clips – offering a quick and easy way to improve communication during a hospital or GP visit. It means that the Deaf person can attend appointments on their own without the need to involve a family member or friend and thus retain their privacy and dignity.

SignTranslate is in use in many GP practices and one user reports that “I can now go and see my GP without my 9 year old daughter having to translate for me. I feel so much more able to have a frank discussion”.

Phil Murden, Managing Director of SignTranslate, said: “With only 400 fully qualified interpreters to support approximately 70,000 Deaf people who use BSL as their first language, it is virtually impossible to find an interpreter at short notice. For too long Deaf

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SignHealth is the Healthcare Charity for Deaf People. We are committed to bringing better healthcare and equality of service provision to deaf people through campaigning, working in partnership with other organisations and the provision of specialist services for deaf people. These include Health Promotion, counselling, advocacy, outreach and supported living.

people have needed to call upon relatives (including their children) or friends to help them communicate. And they are doing this at a most stressful time, when either unwell, in pain or receiving bad news”.

In addition to the translation of pre-defined questions, the SignTranslate program allows on-line access to “live” fully qualified BSL interpreters. Via a web-cam, a Deaf patient can enjoy a fully interactive discussion with a clinician through the remote interpreter. The SignTranslate Hospital program’s questions specialise in audiology, maternity, ward care, A & E and major incidents and have been developed with advice from some of the country’s leading hospitals.

SignHealth Chief Executive Steve Powell said today “We are extremely proud of our SignTranslate team in gaining this award. Doctors are telling us good communication is critical in a healthcare setting but interpreting support can be difficult to find. We hope SignTranslate Hospital will be an effective communication tool for short notice, unsupported appointments.”

The SignTranslate GP program is currently free of charge until 31st July to GP practices in England. SignHealth hope that all Deaf people will continue to ask their GP for SignTranslate to be available in their surgery.

As well as BSL, the program provides spoken and written translations for 12 foreign languages. It is the only internet based translation tool of its kind in the UK. Visit www.signtranslate.com to see a demonstration of the program.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Please note; it is the convention adopted within the Deaf community of using an upper case D when referring to those who identify themselves culturally and

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2. **SignHealth** is the only UK charity focussed on improving the mental and physical health of Deaf people. SignHealth already has a track record of delivering change in care and treatment and in providing supported living, advocacy, outreach, counselling and health promotion, all within a BSL supported environment. Projects are located in London, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham. SignHealth also works with service providers to improve health services for Deaf people and with other health and Deaf charities to provide health information and education.
www.signhealth.org.uk
3. **SignTranslate** is wholly owned by SignHealth, the healthcare charity for Deaf people. SignTranslate provides unique web-based translation programs for use with Deaf and hard of hearing people and those with limited English. SignTranslate also offers on-line interpreting for Deaf people via a simple web-cam. All interpreters are fully qualified and registered and follow a strict code of practice.
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Deaf charities to provide health information and education. Pending an application to the Big Lottery, SignHealth in partnership with Deaf organisations across the UK, will launch the largest survey of the health of Deaf people in the UK later this year.

3. For more information on SignHealth, contact Steve Grudgings or Rowena Dean on 01494 687600 or visit www.signhealth.org.uk, sgrudgings@signhealth.org.uk or rdean@signhealth.org.uk
4. SignTranslate is a wholly owned subsidiary of SignHealth. www.signtranslate.com

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