



## **Overview**

The permanent staff members are Shell Roca, Head of Caritas Deaf Service, Sarah Metcalfe, Deaf Service Development Worker and Nikki Dhillon Keane, Signs of Hope Counsellor. We are delighted that during 2025 we have also be joined by Lottie Anning, Development Worker from the Community Development Team, to work with us a few days each month.

We are greatly supported by various members of the Deaf Community who voluntarily give their time and skills at the Liturgy Group, Bible Study and in many other ways. We are grateful to all the clergy who give their time and energy to the Deaf Community and who support the Deaf Service staff. We would like to thank the Sisters of the Assumption for their continued support, in the use of their chapel for Holy Week, and the many other ways they support us behind the scenes. Our thanks also goes to the other Caritas team members who support us and without whom we could not deliver many of the events that we run.

## **Liturgies**

The Deaf Community Mass is on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month in Westminster Cathedral Hall at 4:30p.m. These Masses are signed by one of our group of priests with signing skills.

On the second Sunday of the month, Mass in Word and Sign, is celebrated by Fr Keith Stoakes at St Mary & St Michael's, Commercial Road.

During the year there were also signed Masses at Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Welwyn Garden City, Allen Hall seminary, Westminster Cathedral and St Gregory the Great, South Ruislip, with a signed Mass available for Deaf people to attend for the first three weeks of Advent.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered in sign language before the monthly Deaf Community Mass in the Cathedral Hall.

We greatly appreciate all the support that we receive from the clergy who offer their time and support for the Deaf Community. Bishop Paul McAleenan, Canon Norbert Fernandes, Canon Shaun Lennard, Fr Keith Stoakes, Fr Robin Ellwood, Fr Paulo Bagini, Fr Willie Skehan, Fr Brian O'Mahony, Mgr Vladimir Felzmann and Fr Daniel Daley.

We would also like to thank all our volunteers who support our work. This includes both Deaf and hearing people. Their assistance is invaluable and we are grateful for the support that they give to the team.

During 2025 the following liturgies have also been communicated in sign language:

- Lourdes Mass, Westminster Cathedral, February
- Ash Wednesday, Westminster Cathedral, March
- St Patrick's Day Mass at Lunch club group meeting, March

- Palm Sunday, St Mary & St Michael, Commercial Road, April
- Stations of the Cross, Westminster Cathedral, Lent
- Chrism Mass, Westminster Cathedral, April
- Maundy Thursday, Maria Assumpta Chapel, April
- Good Friday Stations of the Cross, Maria Assumpta Chapel, April
- Good Friday Passion, Maria Assumpta Chapel, April
- Easter Vigil, Maria Assumpta Chapel, April
- Mass in Word and Sign, Allen Hall Seminary, May
- Walsingham pilgrimage Mass and reconciliation service, May
- Parish week day lunchtime Mass, Jubilee visit, Westminster Cathedral, June
- Parish week day lunchtime Mass, Jubilee visit, St Mary Moorfields, July
- Ordination of Fr Stephen Trafford, St George's Cathedral, Southwark, July
- Retreat day and signed Mass, Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Welwyn Garden City, July
- Inclusive Mass, St John Fisher, Perivale, September
- Signed Mass at Nicholas Breakspear Enrichment Day, October
- Parish week day Mass, Jubilee Visit, English Martyrs, Tower Hill, October
- Jubilee Year, Westminster Way, Pilgrim Mass, Westminster Cathedral, November
- Irish Chaplaincy Memorial Service, Westminster Cathedral, November
- Memorial Service, Sacred Heart, Quex Road, Kilburn, November
- Closing worship, retreat day for catechists, Welwyn Garden City, November
- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent, St Gregory the Great, South Ruislip, December
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Welwyn Garden City, December

### **Communication Support**

- We have provided sight translations of documents and letters, and have written replies to correspondence for clients as they have signed to us what they want to say.
- We have provided IT support for clients and shown them how to use various functions on their smartphone.
- We have made telephone calls on client's behalf on a range of issues, for example, booking taxis and arranging hospital transport.
- There are other occasions that we have supported clients by interpreting for them. Including the details here in this report of what we were doing and where, would break confidentiality therefore we cannot refer to specifics.

### **Catechesis and Sacraments**

- Our bible study sessions continued and are now, face to face, online, and provided in a printed format. These are co-ordinated by Sarah and with input from various Deaf people. These sessions have now moved permanently to Vaughan House.
- Topics covered in 2025 Frankincense, The Meaning of Numbers, Colours and What is the Papal Jubilee? In preparation for following the Westminster Way.
- We were delighted to be joined by Louise Walton, from the Agency for Evangelisation in November who gave a talk on the different religious orders for men.
- Our liturgy group continues to meet to organise the readers for our regular monthly Masses in Westminster Cathedral Hall and Holy Week services at Maria Assumpta Chapel, Kensington.
- Alongside the Agency for Evangelisation, we prepared a Deaf adult for Confirmation, and were delighted that Bishop Paul McAleenan was able to Confirm him at the Deaf Community Mass in March.

## **Deaf Awareness and BSL/Liturgical Signing Sessions**

- A group of seminarians from a variety of Dioceses have continued with learning to sign. 5 students carried on from the course that was started last year and were joined as well by a lay student studying at Allen Hall. A Signed Mass was celebrated in the chapel at Allen Hall, which the seminarians who have been learning all took part in. Fr Paulo Bagini celebrated the Mass and the Deaf Community that attended were all impressed with the skills and interest that the seminarians showed. There was an opportunity after the Mass to socialise and for refreshments.
- A session on Deaf Awareness was run for the volunteers from the Guild of St John Southworth specially in advance of the Deaf Community's visit to Westminster Cathedral for a guided tour.
- An online talk was given to the Caritas reps, explaining the work of the Deaf service and some basic Deaf Awareness tips.
- In May the Diocesan Education team organised a Festival of Hope at Westminster Cathedral. Over 150 schools attended and were able to meet various Catholic organisations to find out what they do. A number of resources were available to visitors covering D/deaf and Deafblind Awareness and specific Catholic BSL resources. Adoration, which included readings, music, prayers and a drama performed by a group of young people was also made accessible in BSL.
- We were invited to run a basic BSL workshop at the Nicholas Breakspear Enrichment Day. Staff attended sessions in the morning and the afternoon and the day concluded with a signed Mass led by Canon Norbert Fernandes.
- Following one of our regular clients moving to a care home, two Deaf Awareness sessions were run with the staff that now look after this client to help them with understanding and communion. The local parish priest was also introduced to this client and given resources and information so he is able to support this lady in the future.
- A BSL taster course was run for the Caritas team members who often support our events and who wanted to learn some basic communication skills and tips. This course finished with a tea party with the Deaf Community so that the team could try out their newly learned skills.

## **CDA**

- We organised a coach to take people to the annual Walsingham pilgrimage and we assisted with the interpreting at the Mass and the reconciliation service. Deaf people from Southwark and Brentwood Diocese joined us on the coach.
- We also promoted other Catholic Deaf Association national events (meetings/conferences) on our social media platforms.

## **Jubilee events**

During this Jubilee year we had a variety of visits and information that we made available to the Deaf Community.

- A tour of Charterhouse with a Deaf guide took place in April. It was a fascinating day out to one of the locations on the "Westminster Way".
- In June there was a guided tour of Westminster Cathedral that was interpreted by the Caritas Deaf Service team.
- In July we took part of the Westminster Way walk both in person and virtually, visiting Ely Place and the walking to St Mary Moorfields via Charterhouse.

- Also in July we had a retreat day at Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Welwyn Garden City, the Jubilee church for Hertfordshire.
- In October we visited English Martyrs Tower Hill, having started off by walking to the place of the scaffold opposite the Tower of London, where various Catholics were martyred.
- We produced the Westminster Way booklet in an online format in BSL so that any Deaf person was able to access the information themselves in their own language. We funded the printing of the Diocesan Westminster Way booklet for Deaf pilgrims and a QR code was created, hosted on our YouTube channel, to be shared more widely making the Westminster Way booklet more accessible but the information being available in BSL. Members of the Deaf Community were included in the filming of the various stages, the official Jubilee prayer and hymn.

Stage 1 Tower Hill to St Mary Moorfields <https://youtu.be/swHDRi79ENU>

Stage 2 St Mary Moorfields to Charterhouse <https://youtu.be/BAQOmG7qBMU>

Stage 3 Charterhouse to Ely Place <https://youtu.be/XrZ9BBNJIPA>

Stage 4 Ely Place to Maiden Lane <https://youtu.be/dC3ddNCEyzw>

Stage 5 Maiden Lane to Westminster Cathedral [https://youtu.be/c\\_S535qOHxk](https://youtu.be/c_S535qOHxk)

- In December the Deaf Community were the first group in Westminster Diocese to see the CAFOD Jubilee Icon and we thank Bishop Paul McAleenan and Canon Chris Vipers, for joining us for the morning. A talk about icons in general and the Jubilee Icon specifically was given and then Bishop Paul shared his reflection on the Icon. It was great to have Deaf people join us from Arundel and Brighton Diocese as well as our regular attendees.

### **Other events and meetings**

- Our Lunch Club (previously the Retired Group) met regularly for a shared lunch. The Deaf Service team prepare the food to ensure Food Safety standards are adhered to. We held a Mass and a celebration for St Patrick's Day and a Christmas party this year.
- For the Christmas celebration we decorated the room and hosted a tombola so that the Deaf people who attend, were able to celebrate Christmas together.
- We supported the retreat day for catechists run by the Agency for Evangelisation and held at Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Welwyn Garden City in November.

### **Communications**

- The Caritas Deaf Service website continues to be regularly updated with information relating to the Deaf Service's events, services and with current articles.
- The newsletters and e-newsletters continue to be produced.
- We continue to use our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/wdds](http://www.facebook.com/wdds)) to good effect, as well as X, Instagram (@CaritasDeaf) and YouTube ([www.youtube.com/@deafservice5095](http://www.youtube.com/@deafservice5095)). At the end of 2025 we had over 1860 social media followers spread across Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) and YouTube.

- Articles on Deaf Awareness and the importance of learning BSL were shared in Deaf Awareness week, both on our website and the Independent Catholic News online.
- In Learn to Sign week in March, a social media campaign was run with members of the Deaf Community here in Westminster showing in video clips some basic signs for people to learn.
- Articles also appeared in Mosaic and Oremus about the Deaf Community.
- On our YouTube channel as well as the regular bible studies, information was provided in BSL about the volunteer awards and a special prayer on the death of Pope Francis was also signed.
- In July, feedback from the Deaf Community suggested that some of the community were unhappy about the use of the Cathedral Hall and wanted Mass to be in the Cathedral. A three-month consultation followed, the majority of people expressed the wish to stay with Mass in the Cathedral Hall but to improve the ambiance so a large crucifix has been procured along with some religious art. More may follow in 2026 if something suitable can be sourced and funded.

### **Signs of Hope**

- Signs of Hope, the Deaf Counselling service, continues to be in demand. The work of the counselling service is both life changing and lifesaving. Clients referred to the service can be at risk of suicide and self-harm and may well have already made attempts on their life. During 2025, there were over 340 counselling sessions delivered by Signs of Hope. It remains the only UK service offering faith-sensitive counselling in BSL.
- We are able to offer clients the choice of a Deaf or hearing counsellor who has fluent BSL skills.
- Signs of Hope now has 1098 followers on X (Twitter).
- Due to a restructuring within Caritas Westminster, from January 2026, Signs of Hope will no longer be part of the Deaf Service but will be managed as part of Caritas Hope.

### **Other issues**

- We have supported Caritas St Joseph's interpreting at their Achievement Day and at Inclusive Masses.
- We continue to support the clergy that sign Mass for the Deaf Community mostly with one-to-one sessions as and when required. These have been done either face to face, via Zoom or by pre-recording video clips and using YouTube or WhatsApp to forward them to the relevant priest.
- The Caritas Deaf Service team all continue with their own professional development in BSL, counselling and other areas when opportunities arise.
- Throughout the year we collected £154.40 for Mary's Meals and £355.50 for the Daughters of Charity project for Deaf people in Nigeria.

### **Feedback**

"Thank you for all your hard work. I have really enjoyed all the Jubilee events this year they have been so interesting" (translated from BSL)

"My family also attended the Good Friday liturgy and mingled with the congregation after the service; ... I saw for myself the Deaf Community's kindness and hospitality in welcoming strangers." A seminarian working who has been learning BSL and who worked with us in Holy Week.

"We did enjoy the day. It was interesting to know about things in the church. Canon Norbert was great." Attendee on our retreat day in Welwyn Garden City.

"It was a wonderful pilgrimage." "It was a great time of spiritual prayer on pilgrimage after we signed our beautiful poems and prayers in the church." Reflections from attendees on the Walsingham Pilgrimage.

"I was so impressed with them! They would all pass Level 1 easily." A Deaf person attendee at signed Mass at Allen Hall.

"It is very interesting. Many thanks to Ian Urquhart's speaker. He was very patient in explaining the long history. I love learning about Bible study. It is valuable and worthwhile to learn what Jubilee means this year." A bible study attendee.

### **Reflection for 2025**

*We are very grateful to the Albert Gubay Foundation and the Cardinal's Appeal both of which have provided core funding for the Deaf Service and to the generous private donors who support our work and have facilitated so much of our engagement with the Jubilee Year, Pilgrims of Hope. We have been privileged this year to work with a Deaf adult who was confirmed in March this year and a Deaf child who now altar servers at the Deaf Community Mass and the Mass in Word and Sign at St Mary and St Michael's Parish. We have had a busy year and between Shell and Sarah they have travelled roughly the same distance as from Westminster Cathedral to Pathos! (Just over 2600 miles). For me the highlights of the year were the Jubilee events, especially our retreat to Welwyn Garden City, the stunning Ely Place and the interesting Charterhouse trip. We are now looking for to our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2026.*

Shell Roca  
January 2026