

Profile of Hexham & Newcastle Diocesan Deaf Service

The Deaf Service took on its current role in 1989 when Bishop Ambrose streamlined the service and undertook the provision of a pastoral service only.

Currently we maintain that service and are represented as follows.

- Based at St Cuthbert, Cowpen, Blyth is Fr. Robert Kinlen who is our Director of the Deaf Service and Chaplain to Deaf people also he has additional parish and hospital responsibilities.
- Based in Newcastle Deaf Centre is David Marshall who is employed as pastoral worker for 37 hours per week. David represents the Deaf Service on the SVP Executive Group who manages the Newcastle Deaf Centre.
- Based in St. Mary's Parish Centre, Stockton-on-Tees is Kath Oyston who also is employed as pastoral worker for 20 hours per week.

We see our roles as enabling deaf people to participate fully in the life of the catholic community, i.e. the spiritual, social and community life of the Church, therefore, we need to be informed and up to date with what is happening in the diocese and our churches at the present time.

The following list is a sample of our basic work:-

- Providing signed masses for deaf people
- Providing signed and pastoral support for the sacraments, marriages, baptisms, funerals, confirmations.
- Arranging and undertaking sacramental preparation and assisting deaf people to be included in the sacramental preparation of their children (deaf and hearing)
- Facilitating marriage guidance, counselling and spiritual direction for deaf people.
- Visiting and supporting deaf people in their homes, hospital and residential care.
- Being available and taking an active role within the deaf community.
- Promoting Deaf Awareness and organising and sometimes providing sign language classes in schools, parishes and other groups, e.g. Ushaw students, brownies, guides etc.
- Visiting Deaf Clubs to promote the Christian ethos.
- Liaising with parishes and other diocesan organisations.
- Liaising and interpreting in school situations and carrying out initial responses for social work assistance in certain situations and making the relative referrals.
- Providing and initiating training for deaf people e.g. lay ministry, CCRS training.
- Liaising with national church bodies and deaf associations and equivalent agencies in our diocese and others.
- Liaising with and sharing with other deaf Christian churches
- Liaising and maintaining good working relationships with social workers for the deaf and other professionals.
- Arranging and running conferences, retreats, and pilgrimages for the Deaf and finding funding to cover speakers, venues and interpreters.