



Living Well North Tyneside

Supporting Health and Wellbeing

Every year, on the 23rd of September, people around the world come together to celebrate the International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL). This special day is part of the larger International Week of the Deaf, a global initiative aimed at promoting awareness about the rights of deaf individuals and the importance of sign languages.

The United Nations first declared 23rd September as the official day to celebrate sign languages in 2017. This date was chosen to commemorate the establishment of the World Federation of the Deaf in 1951, a pivotal moment in advocating for deaf communities globally. The celebration shines a spotlight on the critical role sign languages play in ensuring the rights and inclusion of deaf people in society.

Why is International Day of Sign Languages Important?

Sign languages are natural, fully-fledged languages that have their own syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. For the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, they are an essential means of communication, education, and expression. Unfortunately, sign languages have not always been given the recognition they deserve. Historically, deaf people have faced marginalisation, with limited access to education, services, and equal opportunities.

International Day of Sign Languages seeks to break down barriers by raising awareness and encouraging the use of sign languages. It highlights the diversity of the over 300 different sign languages used globally, including British Sign Language (BSL) in the UK.

Promoting Inclusion and Equality

Celebrating this day emphasises the need for equal access to public life for deaf individuals. The theme for 2024, “A World Where Deaf People Everywhere Can Sign”, encourages governments, businesses, and communities to take action. In practical terms, this could mean increasing access to interpreters, ensuring public services are accessible in sign language, and raising awareness of the need for sign language education.

For example, in the UK, BSL has been recognised as an official language since 2003, but there is still progress to be made in areas like education, healthcare, and public services. Events like the International Day of Sign Languages remind us that inclusion is a continuous process that requires collective efforts from all sectors of society.

How to Get Involved

Anyone can play a part in celebrating and promoting sign languages. Here are a few ways you can get involved:

1. **Learn the Basics of Sign Language** – Try learning simple phrases in British Sign Language (BSL). Many resources and introductory classes are available online.
2. **Raise Awareness** – Share information about the importance of sign languages on social media, using hashtags like #IDSL2024 or #SignLanguages.
3. **Support Deaf Organisations** – Donate to or volunteer with organisations that support deaf communities, such as the British Deaf Association or local deaf charities.
4. **Attend Local Events** – During International Week of the Deaf, many communities host events, workshops, and sign language classes. Check your local listings to see how you can participate.

The Future of Sign Languages

As we move forward, it's essential to continue advocating for the inclusion of sign languages in all aspects of life. With technological advancements, such as video relay services and real-time captioning, there is hope that communication barriers will continue to break down. However, true inclusion is only possible when society recognises sign language as equal to spoken languages, with the same rights to education, employment, and cultural expression.

International Day of Sign Languages is a celebration of diversity and a call to action. It's a reminder that communication is a fundamental human right and that everyone deserves to be heard, no matter how they speak.

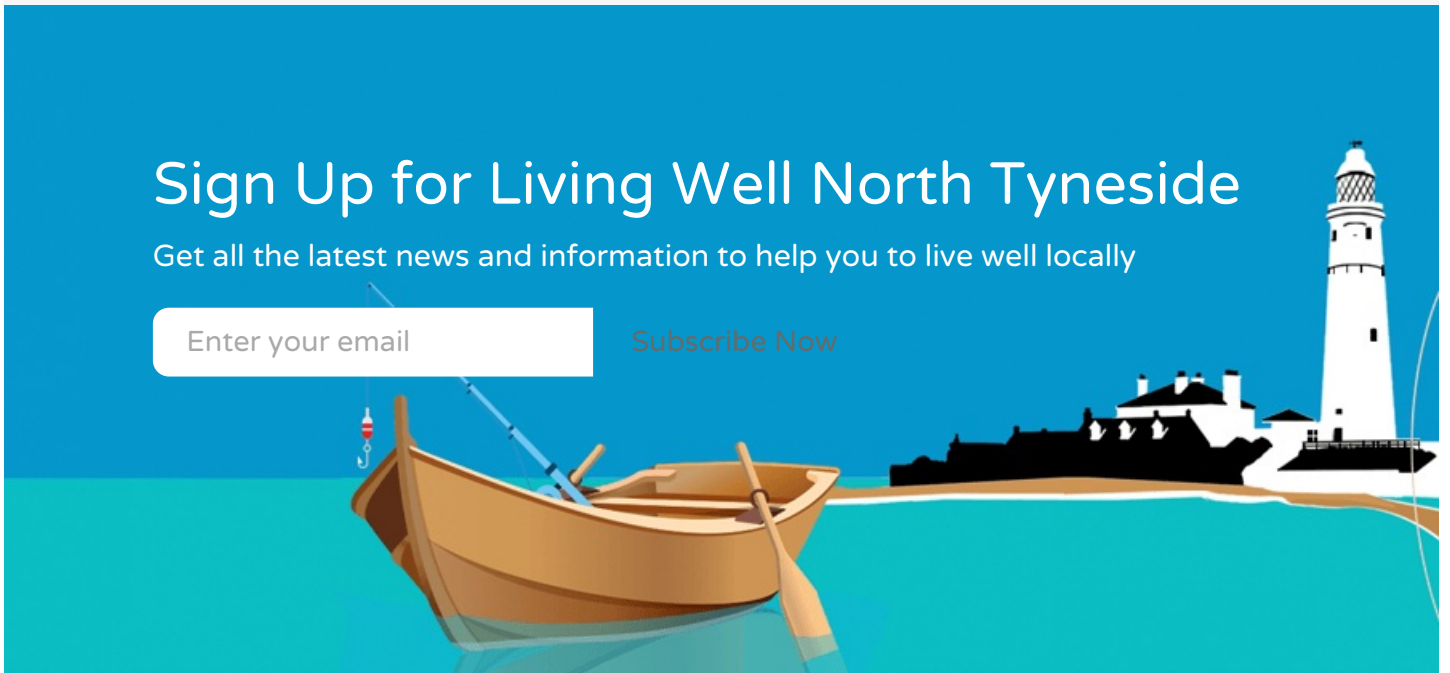
So, on 23rd September, let's celebrate the beauty of sign languages and continue to work towards a world where everyone can communicate freely, with respect and understanding.

Related Links

- [British Deaf Association \(BDA\)](#)
- [BSL Courses Online](#)
- [The UN](#)



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A promotional banner for Living Well North Tyneside. The background is a vibrant blue sky and teal sea. In the foreground, a wooden boat with a red and white buoy is on the water. In the distance, a white lighthouse stands on a rocky shore. The text 'Sign Up for Living Well North Tyneside' is written in large white font. Below it, 'Get all the latest news and information to help you to live well locally' is written in a smaller white font. A white input field with the placeholder text 'Enter your email' and a 'Subscribe Now' button are positioned in the center.