



SB UK
SIGNING BANKS.UK

CASE STUDY

Services for
d/Deaf
customers at
Santander

OVERVIEW

At Santander, we recognise and understand the barriers faced by the d/Deaf community when it comes to financial inclusion and fair access to banking services. That's why over recent years, we have consistently expanded and improved our services for this group of customers, so that we can ensure they get parity of service with hearing customers across all our banking channels.

LISTENING TO DEAF VOICES

At Santander, when we do things for d/Deaf customers, we want to make sure we get it right, first time. We don't want to do 'd/Deaf' without asking for the advice and opinions of d/Deaf people first. We've set up an internal group made up of colleagues across the bank with lived experience. People with different levels and types of hearing loss, spouses and siblings of deaf people, children of Deaf adults (CODAs) are just some of the colleagues who we now consult with before we act, to check that hearing colleagues and Santander are taking the right approach when we look at new initiatives, colleague training or external communications.



In summer of 2024 Santander became the third UK bank to launch Signly on its website. Signly provides free BSL translations of the written content on Santander's website as the user navigates through different pages. This means that BSL-users can browse our website whenever they want, on any device, in the language that they prefer.

RAISING AWARENESS

In 2024, our social media team worked with a young BSL-user with lived experience to produce three different videos for Deaf Awareness Month in September. The content incorporated current online trends to create warm and light-hearted Deafness and BSL awareness videos. The videos were specifically tailored for audiences on platforms such as TikTok and LinkedIn and received really positive feedback and engagement from the general public.



TRAINING

In addition to having the latest technology to support d/Deaf customers at Santander, we also want our colleagues to have a better understanding of d/Deaf customers and the challenges and barriers they face. We want our colleagues to have the empathy and also the confidence to support d/Deaf customers in the right way. In 2024 we created an in-house short film (approx. 6 minutes long) which featured a Deaf person in an authentic 'day in the life' format. The film helps to break down some myths and stereotypes about Deafness, shows what good customer service for d/Deaf people looks like and conveys the important message that d/Deaf people are just like everyone else, except that they cannot hear. This film will feature in 2025 mandatory training and every single person who works for Santander UK will see the film.

TELEPHONY

01

RelayUK is a free service which helps people with hearing and speech difficulties communicate over the phone. A customer is able to type what they would like to say instead of speaking, and this is relayed to the Santander employee via a RelayUK intermediary who speaks on their behalf. The intermediary will then receive the spoken response from the Santander colleague and will type back to the customer. This service has been around for many years and customers can use a textphone (landline) or a device such as a mobile phone, laptop or tablet to call using the RelayUK app.

02

Santander has partnered with **SignVideo** since 2015. SignVideo offers 'Video Relay Service' (VRS) which allows BSL-users to make phone calls. The VRS allows a BSL-user to start a video call with a professional interpreter, who will then place a phone call and speak on their behalf, interpreting in real time. A BSL-user can easily telephone Santander for free by clicking a button on our website or finding us in the SignVideo app directory.

In 2023 Santander expanded our service offering with SignVideo. The aim was to ensure that BSL-users would have a parity of service with hearing customers. To achieve this, we made calling us via SignVideo available 24/7, not just during core office hours. This means that when a BSL-user needs us in evenings and at weekends for urgent support, they can call us. When a customer needs us out-of-hours, it may be an emergency like a stolen bank card, or concerns about fraud. It's right that BSL-users can contact their banks just as easily in difficult situations.

We also rolled out the capability to place outbound calls to our BSL-using customers via SignVideo. Very occasionally, not everything you need to discuss with your bank can be completed in just one call, sometimes there is need for a follow-up. We can now arrange to call our customers back via SignVideo if this is ever necessary.

BRANCHES

At Santander we want to ensure that d/Deaf customers have parity of access to our branches with hearing customers and we want those customer journeys to be as smooth as possible.

All our branches are equipped with hearing loops and assistance dogs are welcome throughout.

When d/Deaf customers visit a branch, Santander staff will communicate with them in whichever way they are most comfortable with. If a BSL interpreter is required (or ISL if required in Northern Ireland), we will always book one, free of charge. If a customer wishes to hire their own professional interpreter, we can also cover the cost.

We're aware that booking face-to-face interpreters can take significant time due to high demand. If a BSL-user prefers, they can get free, on-demand BSL interpreters immediately in branch digitally through SignVideo. They just need to connect their device (phone, tablet, laptop) to our in-branch Wi-Fi and start a SignVideo call.