

General Guidance

What you need to know when booking BSL / English Interpreters

Currently there is a local and national shortage of interpreters. To secure an interpreter, ensure that you book *well in advance*. Interpreters may have trained in a specialist area or may have advanced knowledge in a particular setting. For these reasons and others, users may prefer a particular interpreter.

The Home page has contact details of professional British Sign Language / English Interpreters based in and around the North East of England.

HOW TO BOOK AN INTERPRETER

Give as much information as possible to the interpreter when you make the booking. What you need to consider and discuss when contacting the interpreter:

- Date, time (start and finishing) venue and nature of event.
- The person in charge of the event on arrival.
- Names of co-interpreters, if any.
- How many people are going to be involved in the event and any particular or additional requirements of BSL and English users.
- Purpose/goal of the meeting, workshop, conference, etc.
- Any other information that may assist the interpreter.
- Agree fees and any other conditions of service.

For formal meetings, training and workshops interpreter(s) need to have full details of the subject under discussion *well in advance* to prepare. For example: handouts, overheads, videotapes, notes, minutes, etc. These all help with understanding any technical terms and jargon that will be used.

POSITIONING OF THE INTERPRETER

The interpreter will sit opposite, facing the BSL user and to one side of the speaker. The ideal positioning of the interpreter will change according to the nature of the assignment.

Important considerations:

- Interpreters will choose a location that limits background noise for hearing clearly.
- Good lighting is essential. Light from behind the interpreter darkens the face.

BEFORE THE INTERPRETING EVENT

- Allow time (10-15 mins) beforehand to meet with the interpreter and discuss the topic and aims of the meeting. This supports the interaction in the interests of the participants.
- Sometimes the interpreter and BSL user may also need to meet prior to the assignment.

INTERPRETED COMMUNICATION

Using an interpreter for face-face communication is not a natural everyday process and can be initially disconcerting for participants. The following is good practice guidance:

- There is always a slight delay during interpreting. Allow for this during the interaction.
- Speak directly and face the signer rather than the interpreter (in order not to appear rude)
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace and volume for the interpreter.
- In a group setting encourage participants to speak or sign one at a time. Overlapping conversations are difficult to interpret successfully.
- Written English is a second language to many Deaf people. If there is English material involved as part of the interaction – it is best not to assume that this can be managed without an interpreter. It is courteous to ask the BSL user.
- If a BSL user is writing or reading it is courteous to wait until you have their attention before continuing speaking.
- Watching an interpreter over a long period can be tiring on the eyes. With intense programmes build in sufficient breaks. During rest periods limit demands on the interpreter's skills.

WHAT DOES AN INTERPRETER DO?

In simple terms, the interpreter receives information in one language, analyses its meaning and the speaker or signers intent, and then interprets it into a second language, including the cultural connotations of the speaker/signer.

THE INTERPRETING PROCESS

Simultaneous interpreting of dialogue is a highly complex activity that requires intense concentration. It is extremely tiring after prolonged periods and the quality of interpretation deteriorates. Demanding assignments may require two interpreters. This should be negotiated and the advice of interpreters taken. All day events may require a team of interpreters. In everyday conversations meanings may sometimes be ambiguous or misunderstood. Interpreters may intervene to clarify the speakers/signers intent. This is an important part of the process and promotes understanding by both parties.

THE DYNAMICS OF INTERPRETING

For interpreting to be successful *all* the participants need to play an active role. Interpreters often intervene in subtle ways to influence turn-taking. Situations and environments vary greatly; participants bring varying needs, expectations and knowledge to an interpreting event. Interpreters tailor their service to meet participants' requirements, adopting a sensitive and responsive approach that is flexible to changing communication needs.

INTERPRETING BODIES QUALIFICATIONS & CATEGORIES

There are a number of interpreting bodies. Professional interpreters listed on the North East website are registered or members of the following bodies:

- Visual Language Professionals (VLP)
MVLP = Member of VLP
- Institute of Translation & Interpreting (ITI)
MITI = Member of ITI
- Association of Sign Language interpreters (ASLI)
MASLI = Member of ASLI.
- Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)
MSASLI = Member of SASLI

- Signature
NRCPD Registered = RSLI

Signature also has the following trainee categories: TI (Trainee Interpreter) JTI (Junior Interpreter)

It takes a minimum of five to six years of dedicated education and training to attain the status of MVLP, MITI, RSLI, MASLI or MSASLI – and be a competent practitioner in a variety of settings.

PROFESSIONALISM

All the above organisations provide Codes of Ethics and Practice. They provide an ethical framework around the core values of interpreting:

- Faithfulness to meaning and intent
- Impartiality to participants
- Confidentiality when expected

The education and development of qualified interpreters is underpinned by these values and is how best practice is achieved. Interpreter Codes of Practice or Ethics guide professional practice and inform the public about interpreting as a professional practice. ASLI, ITI, SASLI and Signature each have a Code of Professional Conduct or Ethics to which members adhere.

COMPLAINTS

Any complaint or dispute should be in the first instance taken up directly with the interpreter where both parties may be able to resolve the matter amicably. The contractor of the interpreter may also be contacted. ITI and Signature have their own Complaints procedures. MVLP, ASLI, and ITI members have indemnity insurance.

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

BSL is indigenous to the UK; it is the first or preferred language of around 70,000 Deaf people. This group of Deaf people identify themselves as a cultural/linguistic minority.

There is no universal sign language; many Deaf communities exist around the world and have their own distinct sign languages. British Sign Language (BSL) is a visual-spatial language with its own grammatical structure, vocabulary, sociolinguistic variation and discourse rules. After many years of campaigning BSL was officially recognised as a language by the government in 2004. However this is still not legal recognition. Many governments around the world have not yet recognised their indigenous sign languages.