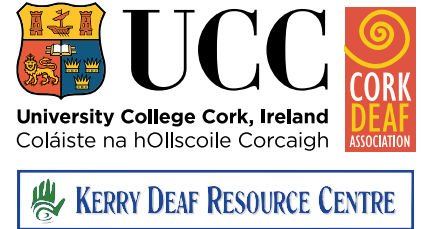




Coimisiún na hÉireann  
um Chearta an Duine  
agus Comhionannas  
Irish Human Rights and  
Equality Commission

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## PROVIDING ACCESS FOR DEAF IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE USERS GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC BODIES

The Irish Sign Language Act 2017 recognises ISL as an official language of the State. The State recognises the right of Irish Sign Language users to use ISL as their native language and the corresponding duty on all public bodies to provide ISL users with free interpretation when availing of or seeking to access statutory entitlements and services.

This guide is intended to support public bodies in fulfilling their obligations in accordance with the Irish Sign Language Act 2017 (Section 6) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (Section 42). To achieve positive and meaningful engagement with ISL users, public bodies, including courts, should:

**Ensure funding and clear policies are in place for the booking, sanctioning and payment of sign language interpreting access [to include in-person interpretation and remote web-based video services].**

- Engage the services of trained and accredited sign language interpreters. For more information: <https://risli.ie>
- Ensure that the provision of interpretation shall be at no cost to the person involved
- Understand the importance and purpose of sign language interpretation, recognising its value to all parties in public body communication, both hearing and deaf
- Make policies around interpretation easy to access. Such policies should:
  - Be applied consistently throughout the organisation to avoid ad hoc patterns of access provision
  - Feature in the induction of new public sector employees & upskilling of current employees
  - Be regularly reviewed and updated to keep in line with best practice
  - Have built-in compliance monitoring and a clear procedure for handling complaints

**Create and maintain accessible communication systems to ensure that ISL users can communicate independently and autonomously with public bodies.**

- Maintain adequately resourced text messaging, video-calling and email systems, which are monitored on a par with telephone-based communication, and which have a reliable and timely reply facility
- Feature ISL and subtitled information across communication channels, including websites and social media
- Design communication systems which allow appropriate time frames for ISL-English interpretation to be provided to an acceptable standard

**Foster positive, inclusive attitudes and demonstrate commitment to providing equitable, non-discriminatory access to ISL users.**

- Engage on an individual basis with each ISL user to establish their communication preferences, ideally from the first interaction
- Recognise and understand public bodies' obligations under law to promote equality of opportunity and to protect the human rights of persons to whom they provide services, including ISL users
- Explore opportunities for staff in public bodies to undertake Deaf Awareness Training and to acquire ISL skills, in line with broader diversity awareness

The content of this guide is informed by input from members of the deaf community in Ireland, based on their experiences of public bodies. <https://www.ucc.ie/en/iss21/researchprojects/researchprojects/islaccesspublicbodies>



           
**ISL ACCESS**