

A few points to bear in mind:

- BSL/ English interpreters registered with the National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and DeafBlind People (NRCPD) follow a Code of Ethics.
The principals are that interpreters will:
 - Do no harm
 - Be honest
 - Keep her/his word
 - Act justly and fairly
 - Respect the personal choices another person makes
 - Strive to do good
- BSL/ English interpreters are human and they may occasionally find assignments distressing, stressful or emotionally challenging. Whilst they will always endeavour to maintain a professional approach there may be times when they have to ask for a break or request to withdraw from the assignment.
- Interpreters also have the right to withdraw from an assignment if they have a conflict of interest.

Complaints

In the event that you have any complaints about the interpreter you should try in the first instance to discuss the issue with the interpreter. If this is not appropriate you should contact the Team Manager, NSLIS.

Both ASLI (Association of Sign Language Interpreters) and the NRCPD have their own complaints procedures.

<http://www.asli.org.uk/>

<http://www.signature.org.uk/> (NRCPD)



Nottinghamshire Sign Language Interpreting Service

For further information please contact:

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Working with British Sign Language/ English Interpreters



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Guidelines

The guidelines below are intended as helpful tips when you are working with BSL/ English interpreters. They are not extensive but should give you some ideas about how to work together to achieve the best interpreted communication for you and your client (s). If you have any queries please feel free to contact NSLIS (see back for details).

British Sign Language BSL is the first or preferred language of approximately 70,000 Deaf people in the UK. BSL has its own grammatical structure and syntax. It is not a visual representation of English.

1. BSL/ English interpreters work in a different way to spoken language interpreters. They mostly work simultaneously- that is, they will sign at the same time as you are speaking or they will speak at the same time as the Deaf person is signing. It makes it easier if you:

- Try and speak at your normal pace - if you speak too slowly or pause too often it makes it difficult for the interpreter.
- Try and indicate changes in topic - if you suddenly change the subject it is confusing for both the interpreter and the Deaf client.
- Remember that BSL has a different grammatical structure to English - sometimes interpreters will ask you to change the way you have said something, ie make a negative statement into a positive one.
- Try and phrase things clearly. Ambiguity doesn't travel across the language barrier. Finish your sentences and try to make implicit information explicit - remember that the interpreter cannot read your mind!

2. The BSL/ English interpreter's role is to work with everyone, Deaf and hearing, to ensure that you understand each other. You can help them by:

- Speaking directly to the Deaf person and maintaining eye contact with them, not with the interpreter.
- Allowing the interpreter and the Deaf client to agree their seating arrangements.
- Trying to minimise background noise.
- Remembering that the interpreter will interpret everything that is said or signed, even asides or 'private' comments.



3. In order for the interpreter to do their job well you should not:

- Allow more than one person to speak at a time.
- Expect the interpreter to work continuously for longer than 30 minutes without a break.
- Ask the interpreter to give their personal opinion during the assignment
- Expect the interpreter to take sides - they should be impartial
- Read aloud from written text - written language is extremely dense and contains a lot more information than normal speech. When we read aloud from scripts, power

point slides etc, we speak much faster than normal because we do not have to think about what we are saying. This makes it very hard to interpret. Try and build in pauses in the right places and pace your speech more evenly.

- Use jargon- try and use clear and plain English and remember that the interpreter is unlikely to know your in-house jargon and abbreviations.
4. A good interpreter will:
- **Intervene**- interpreters try not to disrupt communication too much but sometimes they will have to stop and ask for repetition, clarification or explanation. This will enable them to do their job well and ensure that they are giving the right information.
 - **Ask for preparation**- interpreters need to know as much information as possible about the assignment they will be attending.
 - **Know their limitations** - interpreters will only accept assignments that they feel are within their competence.
 - **Be active**- interpreters are an important part of the communication process and have an active role to play. They will try and ensure that they do not interfere too much but trying to pretend they are not there simply doesn't work!
 - **Promote equality**- interpreters recognise that there is a power imbalance between English as the majority language and BSL as a minority language. Accordingly interpreters will try and redress the balance of power during their work.