

Our ref: GM 1179-2025  
Date: 9 December 2025

**From: The DALO**

Ms Emer Boyle  
Communities Committee Clerk  
Room 430  
Parliament Buildings  
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BT4 3XX

Dear Emer,

Thank you for your letter of 2 December 2025 (your reference CC/25/408) in which you set out the Committee's requests for amendments and further explanation following its deliberations on 2 December. You have requested that the Department's response indicates if the Department will either accept, not accept or partially accept the amendments sought by the Committee. Please see the table below which details the Department's responses/ clarifications for all the clauses which the Committee has requested such decisions and further information on. For ease of reference, this includes the material regarding clauses 1-4 provided to the Committee in advance of officials' appearance on 27 November.

You have requested the draft text of any amendments for Committee review (on all of the Bill clauses). As previously advised to the Committee, the Department will have agreed amendments drafted by OLC. This is consistent with Steps 90-98 of *the Legislation Guidance Note 3 – Executive Bills Step by Step Guidance*. It should be noted that OLC will require time to consider the implications of the list of agreed amendments when undertaking redrafting.

Step 93 of the Guide provides advice on amendments which involve a change in policy content, at which point the Department would need to seek Executive agreement. The Department does not believe that the amendments it has agreed to below cross this threshold. Therefore, following the Committee's meeting with officials on 11 December, if this remains the case, the Department will commission drafting from OLC in line with paragraph 96 of the Guide, and Minister will write to Executive Ministers for information only (in line with paragraph 93).

### Departmental Responses to Committee Request for amendments and clarifications

Clause	Committee Request	Accept/ reject	Department's response
<b>Clause 1</b>	Confirmation that all of the Bill includes the Deafblind community. Members queried whether Deafblind should be specifically referenced in clause one or if its inclusion in clause 11, and consequently of 'common tactile or non-visual forms of the language as used and understood by some deafblind people' in clause 12, assures full inclusion in the Bill.	Clarification	<p>The purpose of clause 11 is to define – <u>for the purposes of this legislation</u> – who is captured under the provisions of the Sign Language Bill. Therefore, the Department can confirm that Deafblind people who use BSL or ISL are captured as Members of the deaf community under clause 11(1)(b) for the purposes of the legislation.</p> <p>The Department can also confirm that the common tactile or non-visual forms of the language as used and understood by some deafblind people, falls within the definition of different forms of BSL and ISL as set out in clause 12(b). There is therefore no need specifically to reference Deafblind within clause 1.</p>

	<p>Could the Department clarify and update the EFM accordingly if it considers that the latter assures this?</p>	<p>Clarification</p>	<p>The Department is content that the EFM references at Clause 11(b) Members of the deaf community and clause 12 Different forms of sign languages, sufficiently confirm the inclusion of Deafblind people and their forms of sign language under the legislation.</p>
<p><b>Clause 2</b>  2(1)</p>	<p>Would the Department be minded to amend 2(1) by removing “to such extent (and in such manner) as the Department considers appropriate”</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>The Department holds the policy remit for sign languages in Northern Ireland and is therefore recognised as the lead department for the purposes of the Bill. It is important that the statutory duties imposed under clause 2 are guided by an organisation with a track record of promoting BSL, ISL and Deaf culture. This has been achieved to date by working in partnership with Deaf organisations through the Department’s roles of chair and secretariat of the Sign Language Partnership Group - although not limited to these - to increase awareness across Northern Ireland. This includes building partnerships across universities, schools, health and social care, the Arts, and the NI Assembly for example. DfC has also funded BSL and ISL Deaf heritage projects to promote the languages and Deaf culture and delivers a successful Family Sign Language courses programme which promotes sign language to parents and families who</p>

			<p>previously were unable to access such family-centred learning.</p> <p>In addition, the Department has worked with Hands That Talk and the Committee Clerk Team through its funding of the Bridging the Gap project to familiarise the Deaf community with the processes and terminology associated with the Assembly and legislation ahead of the Bill's introduction.</p> <p>Therefore, Department believes it is important that it retains the scope as lead Department as drafted in clause 2 to continue to promote both languages and Deaf culture. The Department will set out how it aims to achieve its duties around promotion of BSL, ISL and Deaf culture within its Sign Language Action Plan and the refresh of the Sign Language Framework.</p>
<b>2(2)</b>	<p>Could the Department include a definition of 'Promote' (also used in 2(2)) under key terms in Chapter 4 to indicate, along with other information, that 'promotion', in terms of deaf</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>The Department does not believe that such a definition of promotion to support or actively encourage is necessary and would refer the Committee to the previous response for positive examples of the Department's approach to promotion through partnership.</p>

	<p>culture, is more than ensuring the availability of classes.</p>		<p>Furthermore, the Department will outline actions to promote BSL/ISL and Deaf Culture in the refreshed Framework Strategy and, from this, into its Sign Language Action Plan.</p> <p>At clause 2(2), the introductory wording “Without prejudice to the generality of this section...” sets the context that ‘promotion’, in terms of deaf culture, is more than ensuring the availability of classes and those provisions at 2(1) also apply.</p>
<p><b>2(2)</b></p>	<p>Where ‘the deaf community’ is mentioned, that it reads across to Clause 11 and recognises the deaf community extends beyond sign language users.</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>The scope of the Bill is to recognise BSL and ISL as languages of NI, to promote deaf culture as described and to provide access to service and information through BSL/ISL.</p> <p>Therefore, the Department believes it is important to bear in mind the intent of the Sign Language legislation is to provide access to services and to promote Deaf culture which is broadly identifiable by reference to BSL and ISL – but not solely. The co-designed Best Practice will emphasise the importance of sign language to Deaf culture. Clause 11(1) states: “For the purposes of this Part, the deaf community comprises all people falling within one or more of the following paragraphs...” and lists members of the deaf community within</p>

			the scope of the Bill. Clause 11(4) refers to people who would not normally be considered members of the deaf community.
<b>2(2)</b>	Clarification that the use of 'or' rather than 'and' wouldn't have unintended consequences in terms of promoting one language over another	Clarification	For the purposes of 2(2), the availability of classes is in the context for the promotion sign language. Classes are currently demand led and the linguistic content is determined by funded providers in the Deaf sector such as BDA, NDCS and Action Deaf Youth who deliver family classes in BSL – not both. Foyle Deaf Association has previously delivered family classes in ISL - not both. It is not the intention that families will be able to avail of classes in both languages. Indeed, 2(b) makes this clear by referencing that such classes are “to learn (or improve proficiency in) the Language” Replacing 'or' with 'and' may have the unintended consequence of suggesting that providers would have to offer classes in both BSL and ISL regardless of demand or need. The Bill at clause 1 is clear that both languages have equal status, and it is on that basis that the Department intends to act.
<b>2(2)</b>	Clarification in relation to who the Department	Clarification	This refers to the current cohort of Deaf BSL and ISL tutors who are not 'accredited teachers' as defined within

	<p>considers to be 'other suitable persons'</p>		<p>the Bill as there is no scheme of accreditation currently. The Department is engaged with existing Deaf tutors to explore options for developing such a scheme. As advised in previous briefings to the Committee, this may take some time. The Department will bring forward Guidance to clarify the intent of the phrase.</p>
<p><b>2(2)</b></p>	<p>Addition of:</p> <p>(c) - Deaf adults and their families –</p> <p>(d) - Children Of Deaf Adults (CODAs)</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>The Department interprets Deaf adults as people who become deafened in later life.</p> <p>The Department believes there is no need to legislate for such classes as they can be achieved through existing policy under lead departments and public bodies. The Department has been clear that its Family Signing programme is a priority to tackle language deprivation in deaf children and young people hence its inclusion at 2(2). Over 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents with no experience of sign language and no signing skills. Therefore, the Department's signing programme provides for family centred learning to address that lack of language.</p> <p>Deaf Adults and CODAs do not experience the same levels of language deprivation as they will normally have</p>

			<p>spoken and/or signed language. Therefore, the Department does not consider it appropriate to legislate explicitly for similar classes. The Department believes these matters are better addressed through the refreshed Sign Language Framework Strategy and through the Sign Language Action Plans of prescribed organisations with policy responsibility for deafness.</p> <p>The Department, in response to approaches from Deaf parents, has previously funded a pilot project through the Southern Health Trust for a homework support for primary school aged CODAs in the Southern Trust area. Deaf parents had raised concerns that their lack of English language command meant they were of limited help to their hearing children with their homework and therefore, this may be more of an issue.</p>
	<p>How the Department intends to address the issue of 'language deprivation' – evidence received by the Committee suggests that when children are diagnosed with a hearing</p>	<p>Clarification</p>	<p>The Department works closely with organisations such as NDCS, BDA and Action Deaf Youth which deliver the DfC funded BSL classes to parents and families of deaf children and deaf children. The Department is very aware of the parents' concerns and those of</p>

	<p>impairment/as being deaf, a medical model is offered to 'fix' this, however access to sign language learning is not offered. Witnesses advised this should be offered alongside any medical models to ensure 'the greater use and understanding of BSL and ISL' and to address 'language deprivation'.</p>		<p>the Deaf community that the current medical model does not consistently sign post parents to sign language as an option to address language deprivation.</p> <p>The Department refers the Committee to the previous response regarding its Family Signing Programme. The Department is committed to the provision of these classes which it believes can be more widely accessed through better signposting to them by healthcare professionals. Promotion of the benefits of early access to sign language is an issue that the Department intends to address within the refreshed Sign Language Framework Strategy which may be incorporated into the Sign Language Action Plans of prescribed organisations with policy responsibility for deafness such as the Department of Health and HSC Trusts.</p>
<p><b>2(3)</b></p>	<p>An update from the Department on its discussion with NDCS in relation to raising the age of 19 to 21 or 25. The Committee's collective view is that 25 would be preferred.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>The Department has received further clarification and rationale for the raising of the age for classes at 2(2) being raised from under 19 years of age to under 25 years of age from NDCS, and is content to proceed with this change</p>

<p><b>Clause 3</b></p>	<p>For all of Clause 3 – to ask for confirmation that the Guidance will be clear enough to give confidence to the sector in terms of what “reasonable steps” will include.</p>	<p>Clarification</p>	<p>Per clause 6, best practice must be in the guidance, and the Guidance will be co-designed with the Deaf sector. A first draft of best practice that was provided by the British Deaf Association is currently with the Deaf organisations represented on the Sign Language Partnership Group for consideration and final agreement. Therefore, the sector is involved in the drafting of the guidance. This is consistent with the Department’s approach at clause 2(3) in relation to consideration of raising the age of children from 19 to 21 or 25 in which we took NDCS guidance on this matter.</p>
	<p>Furthermore that the draft of the Guidance the Committee are due to see in the coming weeks, no later than 4 December, will overview this</p>	<p>Clarification</p>	<p>As stated, Guidance will be informed by Best Practice and therefore, the Department has prioritised the drafting of Best Practice with the Deaf sector as the starting point for draft Guidance. The final draft of Guidance will ultimately be informed upon enactment by the sections of the final Act. However, the Department considers the Bill as an access to services Bill informed by clause 3 and has begun work on this key part of the Guidance to reflect this.</p>
	<p>Given that 3(1) sets out that every prescribed organisation must take all</p>	<p>Clarification</p>	<p><i>The Bill cannot provide absolute certainty for every scenario. However, the following draft form of words would</i></p>

	<p>reasonable steps, which in reality would include affordability and practicability, Members agreed;</p> <p>To seek assurance from the Department that 3(2)(b) – would not be able to be used as a basis for non-provision of a service.</p>	<p><i>be included within the Statutory Guidance on providing accessibility to services and information (Clause 3) accompanied by Best Practice. It should be noted that Guidance is not only aimed at improving accessibility but also as part of a process at promoting the respect and understanding of BSL, ISL and Deaf/Deafblind culture and thereby breaking down communication barriers.</i></p> <p><i>Clause 3 Requests for access to services and information through British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) – considerations for prescribed organisations</i></p> <p><i>It is a key public law principle that a public body cannot act unreasonably in the performance of its public functions. The meaning of "reasonable steps" originates in case law which has established an additional layer of common law oversight for public bodies beyond the ensuring of compliance with a public body's statutory powers. Not only do decisions have to comply with the relevant statutory framework, but decisions must also not be so unreasonable that no reasonable decision-maker could have come to them. For example, is a request from a Deaf signer for a BSL or ISL interpreter reasonable? The answer is yes.</i></p>
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		<p><i>A requirement on a prescribed organisation to undertake “all reasonable steps” will broadly entail it exploring reasonable paths and actions to satisfy the request made by the deaf community without requiring the prescribed organisation to overlook or adversely prejudice its own interests. This is however on the strict proviso that the subject organisation has undertaken “reasonable steps” and ideally (in anticipation of future challenge) fully documented the steps it has taken, including advising the deaf signer of the reason(s) for refusal and outlining the organisation’s appeals or complaints procedures to follow.</i></p> <p><i>The inclusion of the words “affordability” and “practicability” require a prescribed organisation to focus its mind in a particular way, imposing a stronger duty than simply being reasonable as it adds another layer to its decision-making process which in turn is another avenue for potential challenge.</i></p> <p><i>‘Practicability’ means, when referring to a task, plan or idea as practicable, people are able to carry it out - it is capable of being effected, done or put into practice. For example, has the deaf signer’s request for an interpreter for an</i></p>
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			<p><i>appointment at short notice failed due to the unavailability of an interpreter.</i></p> <p><i>'Affordability' is not an automatic opt-out for prescribed organisations to deny accessibility to services and information through BSL and ISL. Clause 3 provides a statutory duty that prescribed organisations must take all reasonable steps so as to ensure that information and services provided by the organisation are as accessible to individuals in the deaf community as they are to individuals who are not in the deaf community through the offering or facilitation of the use of BSL and ISL in accessing information and services..</i></p> <p><i>Prescribed organisations should consider the availability of existing contracts or the establishment of pooled resources for economies of scale to provide for such access to services and information.</i></p>
<p><b>Clause 4</b></p>	<p>Can the term “public character” be more clearly defined and explained in the EFM? (Discussion took place in relation to whether “publicly funded” might be clearer for the deaf community).</p>	<p>Clarification on the rejection of the use of ‘publicly funded’.</p>	<p>The intent of clause 4 is to capture key public bodies delivering public services for the deaf community as members of the general public, where there is typically no choice where to go. The term refers to activities that are typically performed by Departments or their public bodies. These functions are expected to be performed directly or</p>

			<p>indirectly by departments or public bodies, and they involve the use of public funds or the exercise of powers given by law – for example, councils or benefits offices.</p> <p>However, the inclusion of the reference to public bodies including persons or groups exercising functions of a public character seeks to capture such an entity who is not listed for the purposes of this Bill and may, in the future, provide such public functions.</p> <p>The Department believes the use of the term ‘publicly funded’ is too wide reaching a definition.</p> <p>The Department would also point out that although the Bill’s scope is for recognition of BSL and ISL, it is a legislative device with wider legal implications and should be drafted as such.</p>
	<p>Would the Department consider Affirmative resolution procedure when removing a prescribed organisation (except in the event that removal is required purely due to a name change), and</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>The Department is in principle content that the removal of a prescribed organisation from the list justifies affirmative resolution procedure whilst the initial listing of organisations, including adding new organisations, is best exercised through negative resolution procedure.</p>

	Negative resolution procedure when adding a new prescribed organisation		
<b>Clause 5</b> 5(1)(b)	Clarifications in relation to 5(1)(b) that 'or' rather than 'and' wouldn't have unintended consequences in terms of issuing guidance regarding one language over another.	Clarification	The reference to 'or' in 5(1)(b) permits guidance to cover issues that are additional or different, respecting that they are two distinct languages.
<b>5(3)(b)</b>	5(3)(b) - that the phrase relating to consultation 'At least one person...' be revised and extended to require at least two individuals or groups representative of the deaf community who use BSL and the deaf community who use ISL	Accept	The clause has raised questions by the committee and the Deaf sector as to its actual meaning therefore, the Department agrees to redrafting to clarify it will be more than one person or group.
<b>Clause 6</b>	In line with Committee request previously made for Clause 4, Members agreed to seek further explanation of the definition of the term 'public character' Confirmation that this explanation will be included in the EFM.	Clarification	The intent is to future-proof the Bill, for example to enable such persons or groups to be captured for listing should public services be outsourced. Officials provided the example previously of two privately run prisons in Scotland which would fall under this categorisation.

<p><b>Clause 7</b></p>	<p>7(1) Proposal to change 'may' to 'must'</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>Replacing 'may' with 'must' places a statutory duty on the department to make regulations under clause 7.</p> <p>Clause 7 provides powers around future proofing the Bill. This is particularly important given the inbuilt statutory review set out in clause 9 which could make recommendations around particular regulations.</p> <p>It might well be that guidance totally suffices or there is no need for the time being to resort to SR hence 'must' cannot be used.</p>
	<p>7(1)(b)(2) – After 'as the Department considers appropriate' (line 30) add 'following consultation with the deaf community'.</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>Not required, how regulations are made and the requirement to consult the deaf community are set out in clause 8(1)(b)</p> <p><b>8.—(1)</b> Before laying a draft of regulations under this Chapter, the Department</p> <p>for Communities must consult—</p> <p>...</p> <p>(b) at least one person or group appearing to the Departments to be acting on behalf of the deaf community.</p>
	<p>7(4)(b) (line 13) - After 'the Department believes this to be appropriate' add</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>Not required, how regulations are made and the requirement to consult the deaf community are set out in clause 8(1)(b)</p>

	<p>'following consultation with the deaf community'.</p>		<p><b>8.—(1)</b> Before laying a draft of regulations under this Chapter, the Department</p> <p>for Communities must consult—</p> <p>...</p> <p>(b) at least one person or group appearing to the Departments to be acting on behalf of the deaf community.</p>
	<p>In addition, Committee sought assurance in terms of what the department have in mind in terms of regulations under 7(1) To this end, the Committee has also asked the Bill Clerk to draft an amendment for its consideration.</p>	<p>Clarification</p>	<p>Its intent is to future proof the bill. The review in 5 years' time may identify areas that need strengthened or technological advances may require regulations to be made.</p>
<p><b>Clause 8</b></p>	<p>8(1)(b) As per 5(3)(b) – that the phrase relating to consultation 'At least one person...' be revised and extended to require at least two individuals or groups representative of the deaf community who use BSL and the deaf community who use ISL (or wording to give this effect)</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Per comments under clause 5(3)</p>

<b>Clause 9</b>	9(1) (line 37) – After ‘this part’ add ‘to be laid before Assembly’	Accept	We will commission OLC drafting, noting that the provision may sit more comfortably in 9(2)
<b>9(3)(a)</b>	– remove from ‘which’ to end and insert ‘on Royal Assent’	Reject	Timing should not begin until clauses are commenced rather than Royal Assent. The Department’s intention at this time is that all clauses will be commenced, except clause 3, following Royal Assent. Clause 3 cannot be commenced until the guidance is published. Therefore, the date of coming into operation is what counts irrespective of whether this is (a) by order as provided for in Cl 14(1), or (b) at Royal Assent if Cl 14(1) is amended.
<b>9(3)(b)</b>	remove ‘5’ and add ‘3’	Accept	We note the need to review clause title etc also
<b>Clause 10</b>	10(5) – Remove ‘negative’ and add ‘draft affirmative’.	Accept	Although the Department does not intend to impose/collect fees, it is content that the reference to this justifies affirmative.
<b>Clause 11</b>	Seek Department view on 11 (1) (b) – Removal of word ‘normally’ (line 33) and seek definition of same.	Reject	The word ‘normally’ in (1)(b) is to ensure that only the appropriate people are benefitted i.e. whose access to information or services depends on communication by signing. The word just takes its ordinary sense and does not need defined in legislation - its every

			<p>day meaning being 'usually, or in most cases'. It is therefore appropriate and it is within this context that the clause should be read.</p>
<p><b>11(1)</b> <b>(d)</b></p>	<p>Seek Department view on inserting 11(1) (d) – (line 38) – adding 'parents of deaf children'</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>The issue of accessibility is focussed on the deaf child in this context. For example, the Department funds Action Deaf Youth to deliver BSL Family Sign Language courses to deaf children and their families – including parents. However, this is conditional upon parents bringing their children to age-appropriate signing courses eg signing through play. It is immersive provision which is deaf child-centric to improve communication life outcomes for the deaf child.</p> <p>Parents with deaf children themselves do not necessarily have issues accessing services unless they rely on habitual or occasional use of BSL/ISL in which case provision is included within the Bill.</p> <p>Whereas it is accepted that parents act on behalf of their children, the addition of parents of deaf children may have unintended consequences as the scope of the Bill is for sign language users.</p>

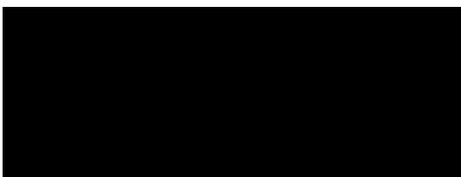
			Therefore, there is no need to legislate around a right of access.
<b>Clause 11</b>	<p>During the course of the deliberations in the context of discussions in relation to who is part of 'the deaf community', Members wished to explore if the Department was minded to change:</p> <p>'For the purposes of this Part...' to 'For the purposes of this Bill/Act..' in order to provide complete clarity.</p>	Reject	<p>The use of the term 'Part' is standard drafting. However, under Clause 11 of the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum it clarifies that this does refer in fact refer to the Bill as it states, "For the purposes of this Bill" which we believe provides the clarity the Committee seeks.</p>
<b>Clause 13</b>	<p>Ask for explanation of what is meant by 'relying on...' and 'everyday activities' and how this relates to 'persons or groups exercising functions of a public character' in 4(4)</p>	Clarification	<p>These are not legal terminologies and the dictionary meaning are sufficient to cover the intention.</p> <p>The 'relying on' as used in Cl 6 and 7, and as found in Cl 11 as part of the meaning of the deaf community, takes its ordinary sense. Note the '(wholly or substantially)' as helping.</p> <p>The 'everyday activities' takes its ordinary sense too. The 'convenience'</p>

			<p>as well as 'necessity' is also key, and the overall gist is to capture the sense of people's communication needs in living their daily and routine lives. Hence the adoption of plain and non-technical language in Cl 13, with seemingly no identified problem for the sake of practical effect in leaving ordinary words undefined like this.</p> <p>There is no connection here with 4(4). Clause 13 sets out what the bill means in respect to everyday reliance on sign language. Clause 4(4) relates to functions/services.</p>
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The Department will reply to your letter CC/25/410, containing a range of Other Issues, before the end of the Christmas Recess. We have prioritised resource on the amendments in advance of the 11 December hearing.

I trust this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



**Laura Coffey**

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Private Office



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES**

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2 December 2025  
Our ref: CC/25/408

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Dear Laura

**Sign Language Bill Deliberations**

Committee agreed at its meeting on 27 November, following the session with Departmental officials, that it would have an additional meeting on Tuesday 02 December, with the specific aim of reaching Committee consensus in relation to proposed amendments and clarifications in relation to the Sign Language Bill.

At the Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> November Members expressed concern that the Department had not yet progressed decisions in relation to its requests from for amendments following deliberations of Clauses 1-4. In order to expedite decision-making, Committee agreed that a single dedicated meeting to consider the remaining clauses would be more efficient and would enable the Committee to communicate it's full position to the Department in terms of proposed amendments for all the Bill Clauses.

At its meeting on 2 December 2025, the Committee completed its deliberations of the Sign Language Bill. As confirmed during the broadcast portion of the end of both Committees (Thursday 27 November and Tuesday 2 December) Members agreed that I write to you to clearly set out Committee's requests for amendments and further explanation:

Clause	Committee Request
<b>Clause 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clarifications in relation to 5(1)(b) that ‘or’ rather than ‘and’ wouldn’t have unintended consequences in terms of issuing guidance regarding one language over another</li> <li>- 5(3)(b) - that the phrase relating to consultation ‘At least one person...’ be revised and extended to require at least two individuals or groups representative of the deaf community who use BSL and the deaf community who use ISL</li> </ul>
<b>Clause 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In line with Committee request previously made for Clause 4, Members agreed to seek further explanation of the definition of the term ‘public character’</li> <li>- Confirmation that this explanation will be included in the EFM.</li> </ul>
<b>Clause 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7(1) Proposal to change ‘may’ to ‘must’</li> <li>- In addition Committee sought assurance in terms of what the department have in mind in terms of regulations under 7(1)</li> <li>- To this end, the Committee has also asked the Bill Clerk to draft an amendment for its consideration.</li> <li>- 7(1)(b)(2) – After ‘as the Department considers appropriate (line 30) add ‘following consultation with the deaf community’.</li> <li>- 7(4)(b) (line 13) - After ‘the Department believes this to be appropriate’ add ‘following consultation with the deaf community’.</li> </ul>
<b>Clause 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8(1)(b) As per 5(3)(b) – that the phrase relating to consultation ‘At least one person...’ be revised and extended to require at least two individuals or groups representative of the deaf community who use BSL and the deaf community who use ISL (or wording to give this effect)</li> </ul>
<b>Clause 9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 9(1) (line 37) – After ‘this part’ add ‘to be laid before Assembly’</li> <li>- 9(3)(a) (line 2) – remove from ‘which’ to end and insert ‘on Royal Assent’</li> <li>- 9(3)(b) (line 4) – remove ‘5’ and add ‘3’</li> </ul> <p>The latter may require associated consequential amendments to Clause 9 title and clause 14.</p>
<b>Clause 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10(5) – Remove ‘negative’ and add ‘draft affirmative’.</li> </ul>
<b>Clause 11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seek Department view on 11 (1) (b) – Removal of word ‘normally’ (line 33) and seek definition of same.</li> <li>- Seek Department view on inserting 11(1) (d) – (line 38) – adding ‘parents of deaf children’</li> </ul>
<b>Clause 13</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Line 17 and 18 - Ask for explanation of what is meant by ‘relying on...’ and ‘everyday activities’ and how this relates to ‘persons or groups exercising functions of a public character’ in 4(4)</li> </ul>

Committee received the Department's response to deliberations on Clauses 1-4 of the Bill last week and would welcome confirmation in relation to the detail of specific amendments set out in its correspondence.

Specifically, Committee requests a response from the Minister / Department to be received for consideration at its meeting on 11 December 2025, at which officials will be in attendance. It is essential that the forthcoming response indicates if the Department **will either accept, not accept or partially accept the amendments** sought by the Committee and provides the draft text of any amendments, for Committee review (on all of the Bill clauses).

To make the most efficient use of time remaining, the Committee has also requested that the Bill Clerk draft the amendments set out above for its consideration.

Committee would be grateful for the earliest possible response.

Yours sincerely

**Emer Boyle**

**Clerk to the Committee for Communities**