

## Response ID ANON-PYJC-FRHK-1

Submitted to Sign Language Bill - Call for Evidence  
Submitted on 2025-05-09 13:47:32

### Consent and introduction

What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Belfast health and social care trust

Please confirm you have read the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee privacy notice by clicking the button below.

I have read the privacy notice

Do you consent to your submission being published on the Committee's website and included in the Committee's report?

Yes, publish but with my personal information and any content that could be used to identify me redacted.

### Clause 1

Do you feel Clause 1 goes far enough in formally recognising BSL and ISL as languages of Northern Ireland?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

### Clause 2

Do you feel Clause 2 goes far enough in promoting the use of BSL and ISL and developing deaf culture?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Over 90% of Deaf children are born to hearing families. It is highly probable that these families will have had no previous access to or experience of a signed language. Language Intervention at the earliest possible time is essential to limit the potential consequences of language deprivation and not having access to a language at the earliest opportunity. Early language development begins at birth and the first two years of life are critical for developing language fluency. There needs to be a much more focused educational approach with appropriate support provided to families at this early stage (diagnosis of Deafness in an infant) to support the development of language in the Deaf infant. Research indicates the bilingualism (English/Signed language) is most likely to provide the best educational/social and psychological outcomes for Deaf children through the life span.

Are there any other approaches (apart from providing for the availability of classes) that could help to meet the objective of the greater use and understanding of BSL and ISL?

Not Answered

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

Access for a Deaf child to language acquisition should be enshrined in a rights based approach. The consequences of Language deprivation (Lack of access to language during critical period of language acquisition age 0-2yrs) can be life long resulting in lower educational achievement, limited employment opportunities and significant psychological and social difficulties that impact every aspect of life as a Deaf adult

### Clause 3

Do you think the duty placed on prescribed organisations to make the information and services accessible to members of the deaf community is sufficient?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Deaf people should have access to all statutory and non statutory organisations, equivalent to access that a hearing person will have. All necessary adjustments and language support must be provided to ensure full meaningful access to information. Consideration needs to be given to the wide and varying ability of sign language fluency within the wide Deaf population - they are not a homogenous group and flexibility and creativity is required to provide accessible information. A 'one size fits all' will not be appropriate. It is essential that organisations consult with the Deaf community and Deaf professionals and other professionals who have knowledge and experience of working within the context of Deaf culture to ensure access to information and services. Adequate language support is vital alongside organisations having 'in house' Deaf champions to advocate and promote 'Deaf aware' services.

### Clause 4

Do you support the approach taken by Clause 4?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

### Clause 5

Do you support the approach to consultation required in Clause 5?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

### Clause 6

Do you support the approach taken in this clause?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Do you feel there is anything else this Clause should include?

Not Answered

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

### Clause 7

Do you support the provision for the Department for Communities to make regulations detailed in Clause 7?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Do you support the approach to consultation detailed in Clause 7?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

### Clause 8

Do you feel the level of consultation required in Clause 8 is sufficient?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

### Clause 9

Do you think evaluating the impact of the Bill in a report every five years is an appropriate length of time?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

A clear statement re. how the impact of the legislation will be measured and what indices will be used to measure positive impact and how areas of unmet need will be captured

### Clause 10

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL teachers?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Different organisations and statutory services will require differing interpreter skill sets. Working in mental health (where there are many abstract concepts) is different from working in a standard medical appointment. Any accreditation scheme needs to take account of the skill sets/competences required to work in specific areas.

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL interpreters?

Not Answered

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

### Clause 11

Do you agree with the definition of the deaf community provided for in the Bill?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer. Please outline what people or groups you think should be included or excluded and why.

Text box for entering additional information:

For a profoundly Deaf person, it is likely that a signed language will be their primary/first language. English will be regarded as a second language. English Literacy skills vary. Research indicates that the average reading age for a profoundly Deaf person (using sign language) will range between 8yrs and 10.6yrs

### Clause 12

Do you agree with the definition of BSL and ISL provided for in the Bill?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer. If you think there are any aspects missing, please outline what you think should be included.

Text box for entering additional information:

### Clause 13

Do you agree with the definition of “everyday reliance” provided in the Bill?

Not Answered

Please give details to support your answer. If you think there are any aspects missing, please outline what you think should be included.

Text box for entering additional information:

### Any other comments

Is there anything which you expected the Bill to make provision for which has not been included in the Bill?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

(1) Provision of Deaf relay interpreters (RI) in areas such as health, mental health and legal and educational settings. Given the incidence of language deprivation within the Deaf population (See 'Language deprivation and Deaf mental health' - Glickman, 2019. Routledge), every effort needs to be made to optimise communication support.

Below are some of the reasons why a Deaf Relay/Intralingual Interpreter may be required (NRCPD website).

Deaf people who may not yet be fluent in BSL, for example Deaf people from other countries in which case some form of 'intra-lingual' Sign Language would need to be used.

Deaf people who have learning disabilities, minimal language skills or other language deficits as a result of poor education or being socially isolated.

Deaf Blind people using a variety of communication methods for example; visual frame signing, hands on or manual signing.

Deaf people who are seriously ill, suffer from dementia or have a mental health condition.

(2) Provision of remedial sign language skills/interventions for those Deaf people who have not had the opportunity to develop fluency in a signed language.

If you have any other comments in relation to the Bill please tell us here.

Text box to enter additional details: