

Response ID ANON-PYJC-FRRE-5

Submitted to Sign Language Bill - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2025-05-09 18:11:04

Consent and introduction

What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

[REDACTED]

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?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

Given in previous submission

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:

Given in previous submission

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?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

Given in previous submission

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:

Given in previous submission

But to reiterate, this should be extended to include private bodies who are performing functions on behalf of private bodies - one such example being GP's making referrals to grief/marriage/abuse-related counselling - operated by charities without the funds to cover interpreters. And such relationships (GP-counsellor referrals) should not be ended at the detriment of the charitable organisations due to this legislation; similarly such relationships should not be used to excuse the public bodies from being prescribed organisations due to cost and practicability. This is why there is a need to look at the infrastructure, and incorporate the necessary changes into action plans etc.

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:

Given in previous submission

Clause 5

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

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Given in previous submission

Clause 6

Do you support the approach taken in this clause?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Given in previous submission

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

Given in previous submission

Clause 7

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

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Given in previous submission

But to reiterate, this should be extended to include private bodies who are performing functions on behalf of private bodies - one such example being GP's making referrals to grief/marriage/abuse-related counselling - operated by charities without the funds to cover interpreters. And such relationships (GP-counsellor referrals) should not be ended at the detriment of the charitable organisations due to this legislation; similarly such relationships should not be used to excuse the public bodies from being prescribed organisations due to cost and practicability. This is why there is a need to look at the infrastructure, and incorporate the necessary changes into action plans etc.

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

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

Given in previous submission

Clause 8

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

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Given in previous submission

Clause 9

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

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

Given in previous submission

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:

Given in previous submission

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

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box to enter additional details:

Given in previous submission

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:

Given in previous submission

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:

Given in previous submission

Clause 13

Do you agree with the definition of "everyday reliance" provided 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:

Given in previous submission

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:

Given in previous submission

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

Text box to enter additional details:

There is currently much talk in the Deaf community around how to respond to this Call for Evidence, with individuals making pleas for X, Y and Z to be mentioned - obviously issues which are very dear to them and they are passionate about. I'm sure these issues will become clear as the submissions are scrutinised.

I want to provide an alternative perspective:

This Bill is being presented on the grounds of linguistic minority, cultural preservation etc. etc. I agree with that as I do believe it is time to move away from the medical model. I know there will be calls for some sort of voucher system so that interpreters can be booked in any setting (including private sector), giving Deaf people independence.

My first query would be: If Deaf people want to move away from the disability model, and towards a linguistic minority model, does that mean they would give up their claims to disability allowances such as PIP? And give up their discounts on items such as rates bills etc? If so, this could provide the funds for interpreters in the areas they are requesting, or for a voucher system.

If not, my second comment would be: they need to be reminded what their PIP benefit is for! I forget the exact wording on the forms, but it is to cover payments for items to do with their disability eg equipment (which is mainly supplied by Social Services) or interpreting costs for private sector appointments. Over the years the reason for PIP payments has been lost - it has become a form-filling exercise with answers being copied and shared - and I now see it being described as a "payment because we suffer because we are Deaf", and then the money is used to pay for car loans etc - which is clearly not what the money is for! I do feel this is a miscommunication and misunderstanding that is being perpetuated, but it causes detriment to themselves when they don't understand the system and how it works ie extraneous interpreting costs.

I do know that there would be a huge outcry if it were to be publicly suggested that Deaf people lose their PIP, but I'm not sure the consequences of applying for this Bill on a linguistic and cultural basis has been fully thought through.

I was at an event where Deaf people were reminded that this is a Language Bill and not a Deaf Bill or Rights Bill, but there were not many people in attendance, and I think there remains confusion over what this Bill can and cannot cover, which is bound to end in disappointment and a feeling of futility and helplessness amongst the Deaf community. The Deaf professionals understand, but the majority of the Deaf community, the "grass-roots" individuals do not understand, and they're the ones who need it most!