

Response ID ANON-PYJC-FRT2-M

Submitted to Sign Language Bill - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2025-03-15 16:21:01

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?

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:

Sign languages must be promoted by the community who use them: there's no detail to say how this clause can be achieved. Teaching families is important but the only true way to promote the language and its usage is to invest in the deaf community who have been so marginalised. Not having a strong deaf voice at the policy table shows. It's legislation written by a hearing team who have no true understanding of the deaf community or sign languages. It's scant and I don't feel there are any tangible benefits for the deaf community coming out of this:

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:

Invest in deaf leaders

Invest in deaf education so kids aren't all mainstreamed and the languages and culture can develop naturally.

Massively improve the deaf school provision we have here so that parents want to send their deaf kids to it

Provide a deaf leadership programme

Empower the deaf a community to be more self sufficient by giving them roles in society

Create systemic change so the opportunities are there
Give deaf workers a fair ATW budget
Support our deaf businesses

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:

No detail of the organisations or the duties being placed.

Clause 4

Do you support the approach taken by Clause 4?

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

I am not sure the department has enough insight to know which bodies the DC really needs to access. We already have excellent access to public services, our government departments our super. The lack of detail is worrying.

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:

I don't believe DfC have consulted fairly. 2016 feedback was sought but little of what was feedback is in the bill. They did a further 3 one off workshops in 2023 but they were not to get feedback; just to give an update. The SLPG all get heavily funded by DfC this their consulting will naturally be biased as they all have individual agendas. Members of the deaf community have not felt listened to the last number of years. One person is absolutely not enough. This is a very political area and I would hope the committee can appreciate that one person or one group may be biased and have personal agendas. Everyone has diff needs and views and these all need to be taken into account.

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:

Reasonable steps is very weak and a get out clause. However it's the lack of detail that makes this impossible to answer.

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:

Detail. Nothing is detailed at all.

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:

This requires a huge amount of trust in the department and I don't feel they have shown they are robust or are able to collaborate/listen to feedback.

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:

All the reasons already stated. They consult with people and bodies they give funding to and don't consult further than that in a meaningful way

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:

One person or even one group is not fair or right especially as those who will be in consultation have personal agendas and receive funding from the department.

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:

What metrics are being used? What are the objectives? 5 years is too long for the initial report.

Clause 10

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

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Text box for entering additional information:

A scheme like this requires extensive deaf academia and a lot of time and research. We have no deaf academics in NI. ■■■ had one 'deaf Dr' who was refused work in Qub despite offering her expertise. The current Qub course is run solely by hearing people. Would non Irish speakers be dictating to the Irish Language speaking community? No deaf people have been asked for their expertise. If you look at the other centres of deaf expertise/deaf studies/interpreting studies you'll see many deaf academics working there. Accreditation takes years and I don't believe it is necessary when we have courses in England, Scotland and ROI that are already lead by deaf experts and have excellent research resources.

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:

Same as above. We do not have the expertise. If we started by giving deaf academics work in QUB to do meaningful research and teaching it may happen but at the moment anything QUB would offer would be substandard due to the lack of expertise. Our deaf community deserves quality and expertise. We have that in GB but it's never been fostered in NI - hearing people have refused to give the deaf community a chance.

Clause 11

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

No

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:

The additional group is very strange. Why is it not 'd'? Why are hearing people included. This legislation seems to be getting mixed up with disability legislation and sure these people would fall under the DDA or something.

Also CODAs have a very unique life experience but I am not sure they need to be included in legislation that is protecting language?

Clause 12

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

No

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:

The terminology is very strange esp around the hands on definitions. Is this language correct? Perhaps I just don't recognise it.

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:

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:

This bill seems to completely miss the community who own the languages. Lots of money being pumped into hearing people who will do things FOR deaf people who could easily do them for themselves given the right resources and empowerment. Deaf ppl need access to services but these are not departments as that access is already excellent. But these Qub course has only 6 or 7 possible new interpreters. The rest are already qualified. Many of our brilliant interpreters qualified in England and had acces to deaf academics. The deaf community gets very little funding. A lot seems to go into this dies course which is not a great course going by student feedback. A lot has changed since covid. Please listen again to what the needs are now. It's so much more than just interpreters. It's community development, cohesion, employment opportunity, access to leisure, access to education, mental health services. And access to deaf people in all these fields who will serve the community much better and effectively.

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

Text box to enter additional details: