



# Foyle Deaf Association

**Presentation to the NI Assembly  
Committee**

**Topic: Call for Evidence**

**Presented by:** 

**Date: 25 September 2025**





## Context & Background

Sign Language and especially (ISL) Deaf users face **ongoing invisibility and access barriers**.

Despite progress in language access, **sign language in NI remains underrepresented**, e.g., in comparison to The Big Word for the Ministry of Justice where there is a menu of spoken languages available.



Current systems are **fragmented and inconsistent**, particularly in sign language education and Deaf awareness.





## C1 Visibility and Access

### Problem:

ISL Deaf individuals are discouraged due to a lack of visibility and structural access.

Spoken languages are readily available, but **Sign Language and ISL is largely absent.**



## Recommendation:

**Mandatory Deaf Awareness Training** for all staff in prescribed organisations. Training should be **mandatory for new staff** and **available to existing teams**.

Streamline sign language education in line with **further education standards**.



## C2 – Embedding Deaf Culture in Organisations

### Problem:

HR departments and disability leads often lack insight into Deaf culture and arts.

### Recommendation:

Collaborate with **Deaf-led arts and cultural organisations.**



Example: The MAC Belfast's work with **two prominent Deaf performers**.

Promote internal initiatives that **centre Deaf experiences** and visibility.



## C3 – Accessible Communication

### **Problem:**

Access to information often lacks linguistic and cultural accessibility for Deaf ISL users.

Using inappropriate registers (e.g. “Middle English” with a child) fails communication.



## Recommendation:

Employ **Deaf translators** who bring both **linguistic expertise** and **cultural fluency**.

Specialist translations (for learning disabilities or neurodivergence) should be **available on request**.



## C4 Centralised Directory

### **Problem:**

Deaf users face challenges navigating **multiple organisations.**

Current pathways are overwhelming for those with **limited English literacy.**



## Recommendation:

Develop a **centralised, accessible directory** of prescribed organisations.

Include ISL video introductions and simplified English resources.



## C9 – Review Periods

### Problem:

A **five-year review cycle** is too long for new legislation likely to encounter early challenges.

### Recommendation:

Implement a **shorter initial review period** (e.g. 12–24 months).

Extend review cycle only after initial systems are bedded in.



# AOB – Deaf Inclusion at the Centre

## Core Principle:

Deaf people should be **front and centre** in all aspects of the legislation.

## Why this matters:

Ensures that policy is not only **for** Deaf people but **by** and **with** them.

Leads to better design, **greater trust**, and **stronger outcomes**.



QUESTIONS ???

