

Reference number

██████████

What is your name?

██████████

What is your email address?

████████████████████

If you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation, please state its name.

Individual

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Yes

(Required) Do you consent to your submission being published on the Committee's website and included in the Committee's report? (For signed responses, these will be transcribed into written English before publication)

Publish in full

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.

I'm really pleased that we've reached this stage, working on the bill. My main concern is around the DDA - is it still effective? Will this bill be equally effective? And critically, will we have the ability to amend parts we disagree with as we move forward?

Clause 2

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Absolutely. Sign language is a language like any other, with all the rich, essential features that make a language complete. It's how we communicate -it's our voice - so yes, I fully support that view.

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/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

No, because this is about much more than just teaching sign language. Language must be visible and used everywhere. While teaching frontline workers is valuable, sign language should not be reduced to just a tool - it belongs to the Deaf community and should be promoted as such. I'd love to see sign language taught in schools, especially to Deaf children, enabling education through sign language, not just about it.

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? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

We need to ensure that all organisations - not just public bodies - provide access. This cannot be optional. The answer should never be "no," and we must be able to walk into any place and access services like anyone else. Accessibility must become the norm. Far too often, cost is used as an excuse for not booking interpreters. We need a shift from looking for ways out to adopting a proactive, willing attitude toward meeting our access needs.

Clause 4

Do you support the approach taken by Clause 4? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

I can't give my support here because I don't know who within the department is making these decisions about the list of bodies. Without transparency, I cannot say yes.

Clause 5

Do you support the approach to consultation required in clause 5? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

This is difficult to answer without knowing who the prescribed bodies are or who will be doing the consulting. I strongly disagree with the idea that one Deaf person can speak for us all - our community is incredibly diverse, with varied needs. Effective consultation must engage those most affected. If an issue concerns older people, consult older people. Meaningful input requires a broad spectrum of voices to reveal patterns and themes. Without that, consultation simply doesn't work.

Clause 6

Do you support the approach taken in this clause? YES/NO

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

I'm not entirely clear on what's meant here. Is it about speaking to the right people when something is needed? Is it about face-to-face or remote interpreting? More clarity is required.

Do you feel there is anything else this Clause should include? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

No response

Clause 7

Do you support the provision for the Department for Communities to make regulations detailed in clause 7? YES/NO

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

No response

Do you support the approach to consultation detailed in clause 7? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Yes, I agree with this question.

Clause 8

Do you feel the level of consultation required in clause 8 is sufficient? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

As I've said before, broad and in-depth consultation is absolutely essential. Even if it takes more time, that cannot be an excuse to cut corners. We must get it right.

Clause 9

Do you think evaluating the impact of the Bill in a report every five years is an appropriate length of time? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

Since this is new, I suggest conducting reviews every two years initially. After that, once things are more established, it could be extended to five-year intervals. In the early stages, though, regular review is key to keeping up momentum.

Clause 10

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL teachers? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

The idea of the department creating its own accreditation scheme is very risky, and I strongly advise against it. We already have the NRCPD register, which is widely recognised and trusted. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Do you support the creation of a scheme for accrediting BSL and ISL interpreters? YES/NO

No

Please give details to support your answer.

We should continue using the NRCPD register. It ensures that interpreters meet the right standards before entering professional settings. It's recognised across the UK, and aligning with this process ensures consistency and quality for our interpreters.

Clause 11

Do you agree with the definition of the deaf community provided for in the Bill? YES/NO

Yes

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

Yes, I agree with all four groups being included. Sign language isn't just for Deaf people - anyone who needs it should be welcomed. I'd even include hearing babies who learn baby sign from their parents. The more people using sign language, the

better. It's a beautiful language, and everyone who embraces it is welcome in our community.

Clause 12

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

YES/NO

Yes

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

Yes - "visual" is the key word. Deaf people rely on visual communication, and for our deafblind community, that includes hands-on communication. I fully support this.

Clause 13

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

YES/NO

Yes

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

We use sign language every day - in work, in life, in everything. That reliance must be recognised and respected.

Any other comments

Is there anything which you expected the Bill to make provision for which has not been included in the Bill? YES/NO

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

One major omission here is education. From early years onward, we need a system that supports and fosters sign language for Deaf children. Even if a child isn't profoundly Deaf, their access to spoken language is limited - and that affects their access to the curriculum and to school life. Education is foundational. I was educated in Northern Ireland and had to lipread through school, which held me back from reaching my full potential. I strongly support introducing a GCSE in sign language, including Deaf culture and community studies, to educate the wider population. Today's students are tomorrow's doctors, nurses, teachers, and interpreters - exposure to sign language benefits everyone. But we must also ensure that Deaf children are educated in sign language. I cannot advocate for this strongly enough.

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

As mentioned, education must be a top priority. I also hope this bill will mandate access, putting an end to the constant excuses we face. Employment challenges for Deaf people often begin with lack of access to proper education. Without qualifications, access to the workplace is limited. Fix education, and you start to fix employment.