

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.

██████████████████

(Required) Please review the Committee privacy notice at this link. Please tick here to confirm you have read the notice.

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)

██████████████████

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.

This piece of legislation is crucial for our lives as deaf people. We need to be on an equal playing field, and that can be done by providing access at points of contact -in education, in medical settings, and in the workplace. The workplace is a difficult environment for people who are deaf because we have a different language and culture and therefore cannot communicate if people don't know sign language. It would be excellent if this bill could offer more workplace support for deaf people, which includes access to work, courses for colleagues, and other support. If someone is from Poland and moves to Northern Ireland, their language will be respected and they will be given all the access that they need, and we want the same treatment.

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.

Yes, teaching sign language to deaf children and their families is important, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I've seen first hand the difference it makes to attachment when parents can communicate with their children. Language is needed every day in the home, and if a parent can't sign, they won't be able to do their homework with their deaf child. What is more than that, we need sign language to be more visible in society for our everyday lives, and we need accommodations and spaces where we can flourish. And those spaces need to be deaf-led and owned, for example.

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

We need more deaf awareness -an active teaching of deaf awareness in all sectors so that deaf people are not isolated in these areas and there's an understanding of who they are and what their culture is. [REDACTED] a lot of deaf awareness workshops in workplaces, but because of the financial landscape, those courses are not being run, and it's affecting the deaf community's mental health, physical health, and general well-being.

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

I agree entirely with this.

Clause 4

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Yes, I agree with DFC doing this because anytime I have asked them for funding, they've given it to me -so yes, please.

Clause 5

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Yes, I agree with him speaking to a deaf person, because then that deaf person can feed back to the wider deaf community to let us know what's going on.

Clause 6

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Yes, I agree.

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.

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

I agree with the need to listen to the voices of the deaf community and take their views on board.

Clause 8

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

I don't know whether to say yes or no, but 5 years feels too long and maybe two years is better to make improvements along the way.

Clause 10

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

I'm torn with this, as I do want to agree because Wolverhampton, HYATT, and Trinity College all have their own courses and we don't. However, they have deaf academics and Deaf Studies, which is why their courses are effective. We don't have that expertise here, and without that, the course will be substandard. If we looked at a mechanism to train up the deaf people who live here who would be willing to devise and teach a course like that, I would say yes - but with the current landscape, I would say absolutely no.

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Yes, I agree to having our own mechanism whereby the deaf community here can monitor the work of interpreters and decide who's good and who isn't.

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.

I agree with all 4 categories, as they place the emphasis on communication.

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.

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.

I 100% agree with this because without sign language, we'd be lost and completely depressed.

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.

Now that I've gone through each of the clauses, I realise there are gaps, and one of the big gaps is a sign language centre for the deaf community. I think we're being treated less than immigrants who come here from other countries and get a lot of government support, and I want to see the support we are getting equal to that. We used to have a deaf centre called Wilton House, and every deaf person walked in with a smile because it was a deaf space. All the deaf organisations and charities were based there, and it housed deaf sports and the children and youth programmes. It was brilliant. It was a place where sign language was everywhere, and older people even went for a bit of company and chat. No one felt lonely when we had Wilton House. Education is a big area, and we need to ensure our deaf children are being educated well so they don't fall behind their hearing peers. Education is key for the deaf community. You may know that deaf people in NI suffer more mental health issues than anywhere else. We need to have deaf spaces for our community members to be together and support one another and enjoy our culture and language. ATW is another area we need to see changed -for example, I work a 40-hour week and only have interpreter support for four hours. This is nowhere near enough and doesn't compare to the level of support that deaf people get in other areas of the UK. It's unfair. I would also love to have interpreter support for social events and leisure events where I can go and unwind and be like anybody else.

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

I would like to see more recognition and VRS companies who have contracts with various businesses, because very often I will phone one of the businesses and they

will refuse my call, saying they cannot go through a third party - when they aren't going through a third party, they're going through a professional VRS company and interpreter. I would love to see more deaf awareness and basic sign language being taught to all sectors of society so that when we meet people, they understand how to communicate with us. [REDACTED] I would like to see deaf awareness being taught as standard practice. I'm aware there are financial implications attached to all of these, and that's something that has to be dealt with. Again, we need more funding for access to work, because [REDACTED] it's very difficult to not be able to attend meetings and to not be able to do the work that I need to do because I don't have interpreter support. Thank you for your time.