

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)

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.

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.

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.

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.

Clause 4

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

Clause 5

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

Yes

Please give details to support your answer.

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.

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

No

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

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.

I have completed the Call for Evidence via Citizen Space, and I wish to provide a brief summary of my key points in my native language. I will do my best to stay within the three-minute time frame.

In 2011, I drafted and circulated a letter to all MLAs in Northern Ireland proposing the establishment of a bilingual education model for deaf children. This proposal was grounded in extensive research [REDACTED] At that

time, the trend toward closing deaf schools and integrating deaf pupils into mainstream settings was accelerating - an approach I believed, and still believe, does not adequately serve the educational or developmental needs of deaf children.

Since then, we have seen the emergence and success of innovative models - deaf schools operating within larger hearing school campuses. These differ significantly from traditional units or peripatetic services. They function as autonomous, bilingual deaf schools, providing a full curriculum in a language-rich environment, while benefiting from shared infrastructure and opportunities within the host school. In my original letter, I proposed the creation of such schools in key regions across Northern Ireland to give our deaf children access to high-quality, accessible, and linguistically appropriate education.

Over the past decade, there has been a significant and growing body of research underscoring the importance of language-rich environments and bilingual education in promoting strong outcomes for deaf children. It is now time to revise and expand upon the original 2011 proposal in light of this evidence. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

To realise the ambitions of the proposed bill, deaf leadership will be essential. Research consistently shows that such leaders are nurtured in environments where sign language is central to learning and identity. It is time to cultivate that potential by building an educational framework that allows it to flourish.

We see great potential in establishing a bilingual sign language school in Northern Ireland. For example, we propose that early years education (ages 0–4) include both deaf children and CODAs (Children of Deaf Adults), allowing for a strong foundation in language development for all. This inclusive and immersive environment would then support the ongoing bilingual education of deaf children up to A-Level and beyond.

I am encouraged by the fact that members have already raised this issue, and I am particularly grateful to Kelly Armstrong for highlighting the possibility of establishing a sign language school. I respectfully urge that a specific clause be included in the bill to directly address the longstanding gap in deaf education provision. Northern Ireland urgently needs a bilingual, sign language-rich school to serve its deaf community - beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout a child's educational journey.

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