



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 14/26

3 November 2025

NIAR 258-25

Sign Language Legislation: Translation costs and enforcement mechanisms

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In response to a Communities Committee information request, this briefing note outlines the enforcement and compliance mechanisms in the Irish Sign Language Act 2017 and Welsh translation cost considerations under the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill 2025.

This information is provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in support of their duties, and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as professional legal advice, or as a substitute for it.

Introduction

On [25 September 2025](#), Communities Committee Members raised questions regarding enforcement mechanisms in the [Irish Sign Language Act 2017](#) and the costings associated with the [British Sign language \(Wales\) Bill 2025](#). This briefing note provides a summary in response to those questions.

1 Enforcement mechanisms

The [Irish Sign Language Act 2017](#) does not include any explicit enforcement or penalty provisions for non-compliance. While [Section 6](#) places a duty on public bodies to “do all that is reasonable” to ensure the provision of Irish Sign Language interpretation, and [Section 4](#) requires that persons competent in ISL are not disadvantaged in court proceedings, the Act provides no mechanism for sanctions or oversight if these duties are not fulfilled. [Section 10](#) requires the Minister to review the operation of the Act periodically, but this functions as a reporting measure rather than an enforcement tool. In practice, enforcing compliance relies on [general public law remedies](#) (e.g. judicial review), rather than any dedicated enforcement process within the Act itself. In the [example of a deaf law student](#) who was asked to pay for an interpreter for a college course, [the Work Relations Commission](#) found that redress of €3000 compensation to the student was appropriate under [Section 4 of the Equal Status Act 2000](#).

2 Translation costs

The [British Sign Language \(Wales\) Bill 2025](#), and its accompanying [Explanatory Memorandum](#) do not include specific costings for the translation and interpretation chain from BSL to English/Welsh and then into Welsh/English. While the Regulatory Impact Assessment ([Explanatory Memorandum, page 66](#)) accounts for translation of BSL plans and reports into Welsh, it does not extend to wider service delivery or ongoing interpretation costs. This omission likely reflects the Bill’s framework nature, which leaves the operational and funding details to be determined later through the national BSL strategy and subsequent guidance issued by Welsh Ministers.

Table 1: Summary of costings discussed at Senedd committee meetings

Document	Quote
<p>British Sign Language (Wales) Bill</p> <p>Explanatory Memorandum</p> <p>Page 83, paragraph 311</p>	<p>Consultation costs include both the BSL translation of materials, added to this are BSL costs of half a day's cost of two BSL signers and one notetaker, calculated to be £3,259 per listed organisation. ...</p> <p>The estimates assume plans will be around 2,000 words which will need to be translated to Welsh and to BSL. The latter requires one day BSL translation, one day chromakey filming, half a day editing and half a day Welsh and English subtitles.</p>
<p>Committee meeting — Equality & Social Justice Committee, 15 Sept 2025</p>	<p>It was estimated that the cost over 10 years could be between £3.8 million to £4.1 million ... the cost to the Welsh Government, £230,000, including producing and updating the strategy and fulfilling its reporting duties; and, for listed public bodies, between £2.1 and £2.5 million, including producing and updating their BSL plans and fulfilling their reporting duties.</p>
<p>Committee meeting — Finance Committee (Welsh Parliament), 24 Sept 2025</p>	<p>The staff and consultation costs to be incurred by listed public bodies for preparing and publishing BSL plans are estimated to be approximately £1 million ...</p> <p>The average figure ... is £7,500. ... It doesn't, of course ... cover any costs resulting from actions following the plans.</p>
<p>Stakeholder commentary — Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI)</p>	<p>The financial memorandum outlines administrative costs but does not fully address the investment required for workforce expansion ... interpreter and translator training ... This investment is not optional: it is a pre-condition for successful implementation.</p>

2.1 Summary

- The Explanatory Memorandum shows there are cost assumptions around translation into Welsh and into BSL (for plan documents) e.g., the 2,000-word assumption and the filming/subtitling schedule.
- The committee evidence shows that while broad cost estimates exist (staff, consultation, plan-producing) they do not cover the downstream implementation costs (e.g., ongoing interpretation, spoken translation services, workforce/training) or translate into a detailed dual language costing.
- Stakeholder commentary flags the gap; the financial material acknowledges translation/consultation costs but stops short of covering full workforce/training needs or dual translation into Welsh plus BSL.