



Committee for Ministry of and among Deaf and Disabled People  
Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee  
Guidelines for the provision of BSL/English Interpreters  
for weddings and funerals

### Introduction

Events such as weddings, funerals and baptisms mark key moments in people's lives when they want their family and friends around them. Many Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) do not have easy access to such events.

When such ceremonies include Deaf people, then BSL/English interpreters should be used if required in order that they have access and are included in these services.

Paragraph 25 of the guidance sent to Diocesan Secretaries in August 2012 states:

#### *Disability Issues*

*25. Quite apart from any legal requirements relating to disability under the Equality Act 2010, our commitment to the universal offer of pastoral ministry requires us to provide as fully as possible for family members and others who have particular needs. Dioceses should seek to make information available to ministers about local sources of advice, provision of signing services etc. Some dioceses will have specialist chaplains who may be used/consulted; there may also be relevant voluntary bodies in the area. However, whatever other sources of advice/support may be available, the DBF will need to be ready to bear any additional costs as this is part of providing the ministry for which the DBF's Ministry Fee is intended.*

These guidelines will help dioceses to draw up their own policies and procedures to ensure that Deaf people have the access they need in a timely and efficient way.

### Guidelines

Any service involving Deaf people may need the provision of one or more BSL/English interpreters

Suggested criteria to apply to requests for funding

The service being interpreted is conducted by an Anglican ordained or authorised minister  
*and:*

The Deaf people attending are the principal participants (chief mourner, bride, groom etc) family members, close friends or representative members of the Deaf community.

*or:*

There are a substantial number of Deaf people attending the service.

Interpreters funded by dioceses should be registered with the National Register of Communication Professionals with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) or an NRCPD trainee Sign Language interpreter. This ensures they are trained, insured and have a recent DBS check.

Any professional interpreter engaged in such work should be expected to submit a copy of their Terms and Conditions.

## **Frequently asked questions**

### **How much will it cost?**

This is difficult to answer because most interpreters are free-lance workers and so their fees vary. The national average fee is around £30 an hour but you should remember that most interpreters will have a minimum call-out fee that they will charge that equates to two or three hours

### **Can't some interpreters provide this for free for the Church?**

Some interpreters already work for free in their local churches, Sunday by Sunday, interpreting the services. Some will reduce their fees for Church work and some will occasionally work without a fee, if the Deaf person who has died, or the Deaf people who are getting married, are known to them personally. However, it should be remembered that free-lance interpreters are highly trained interpreters who need to earn a living. They should be treated fairly. Even if they volunteer, their travelling expenses should always be met.

### **Our service is entirely on the screen/written in a service sheet/book so why can't the Deaf person simply read the text?**

Having written/projected material is really helpful for Deaf people. However, many people do not use English as their first or preferred language and will not be able to engage in worship simply through the written word. A BSL/English interpreter gives access to tone of voice, emotional content and, of course, all the parts of a service that are not written down.

### **We have someone in our congregation who has been studying sign language – why can't they do it?**

They may be able to – but you need to make sure that they have learnt BSL to at least level 3 (A level equivalent) and also had some interpreter training. Weddings and funerals use very complex language and interpreters are trained to deal with such language. It would be good if the sign language user could come to the service to be around for Deaf people who may attend – even if they are not actually interpreting.

### **We have a local Chaplain for the Deaf. Can they do it?**

As above, they *may* be able to do it. However, some of the Chaplains do not have the required skill level and some of the Chaplains are Deaf themselves so may not be able to interpret. You should ask for their advice because even if they are not able to interpret, they will be able to put you in touch with an interpreter.

### **A Deaf person wants to give a tribute/do a Bible reading in the service. How would that work?**

Easily, the interpreters work between two languages: English and BSL, so if something is presented in BSL, it can be interpreted into spoken English for the benefit of the members of the congregation who do not sign.

### **Where can I find an interpreter?**

The National Register of Communication Professionals with Deaf and Deafblind people

[www.nrcpd.org.uk](http://www.nrcpd.org.uk)

The Association of Sign Language Interpreters [www.asli.org.uk](http://www.asli.org.uk)

Both these organizations have databases that are searchable by regions or postcodes.

Signs of God [www.signsofgod.org.uk](http://www.signsofgod.org.uk) has a searchable database of Christian interpreters that are familiar with Church services. They are also happy to send interpreting requests to their members.