

Sign Language Framework

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Foreword

On 1st December 2015, I made a statement to the Assembly outlining my intention to publish and consult on a Framework for promoting Sign Language, including proposals for legislation, to be taken forward through the remainder of this Assembly and in to the new mandate. In my statement I summarised the many reasons for this course of action in one word: 'Inclusion'.

Sign Language is about including some of the most marginalised people in our society. Around the world, profoundly Deaf people identify themselves as a part of a cultural and linguistic minority and view Sign Language as their 'language of need'. This is important to understand because to some extent our use of language influences how we perceive the world in which we live, and our role in it. The use of the large 'D' in this paper denotes the belonging to the Deaf community as a cultural and linguistic minority. However, I have used the small 'd' to denote deaf children for whom this will be a matter of choice in later life.

As a hearing community we need to understand what Sign Language is as many hearing people have the false impression that Sign Language is a worldwide universal language or a visual translation of spoken language. This is not the case.

Here in the north of Ireland, British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) are the first or preferred means of communication for people who are profoundly deaf and are used by a significant number of their families and friends. They are languages in their own right which use hand shapes, movement of the hands, body language, facial expressions and lip patterns to convey meaning. They also have their own grammar, vocabulary and idioms completely different from the grammatical rules of the spoken language.

For many Sign Language users, spoken and/or written language is their second or even third language. As with all linguistic minorities, members of the Deaf community have varied levels of English. While some Sign Language users are fully bilingual in both Sign Language and English, many have limited literacy skills. This means that misunderstandings can easily arise, especially when using more complex concepts or grammar, or less common words. As such, like many other minority language users, Sign Language users can't necessarily read or understand information on Government websites or printed leaflets and various types of literature.

As this Framework document will describe, deaf children with Deaf parents who sign, learn to use Sign Language from their environment as hearing children learn spoken languages from their parents and others. It may come as a surprise to the hearing community to learn that over 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents with little or no knowledge or access to Sign Language. This means that those vital early years' access to communication is lost.

Deaf children often start their early education without having the same level of language skills and vocabulary as their hearing peers placing them at a substantial disadvantage in their early education. This all too often results in poor academic achievement, lower employment prospects and poorer mental health and wellbeing compared to their hearing counterparts.

Last year I met with Emma, the hearing mother of a young deaf boy called Patrick. Emma outlined the difficulties that families like hers face when they are informed their child is deaf; such as the shortcomings in the provision of adequate services to support families with Deaf children. This includes lack of access to free Sign Language classes as a method of family communication for those parents who choose to use sign language as the primary method of communication.

As a mother I know that raising children can be a difficult job but raising children when there is very limited family communication is extremely challenging. Emma is determined that Patrick, and indeed the whole family, is able to communicate in Sign Language. I am determined to help all families like hers during those vital early years of a deaf child's life when the opportunity to acquire communication language skills too often turns in to an opportunity lost. I want you to make the choice to help Patrick and all the many others for whom communication is difficult.

It is simply unacceptable in 2016 that we tolerate such limited access to communication within families let alone throughout society as a whole. Access to Sign Language as a key family-centred early years' intervention for deaf children and their families is a priority for me in this Framework. Access to suitable personal development and training programmes for Sign Language users who have left school with limited academic qualifications is another priority of this Framework.

The research tells us that the removal of linguistic barriers is of paramount importance. A Deaf person must have the right to use Sign Language in any given situation. Communication, participation and access to services should not be a privilege but a basic right.

This Sign Language Framework addresses ISL and BSL in terms of cultural and linguistic diversity rather than disability. This Framework is the result of partnership with the Deaf sector with input from parents of deaf children. I am heartened by the cross-party support my announcement has received to date and I look forward to the day when the actions outlined in this Framework become a reality.

In short, this Framework seeks to ensure that ISL and BSL users have the same rights, responsibilities, opportunities and quality of life as those of us in the hearing

community by enshrining equality and social inclusion in legislation for the current and future generations of Deaf Sign language users and their families.

I want to thank Emma for allowing me to share her story. Let us ensure that children like Patrick get the best possible start in life by providing them with the same opportunities that their hearing peers take for granted, and help them to realise their full potential.

CARÁL NÍ CHUILÍN.

CARÁL NÍ CHUILÍN MLA
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2004 the then British Secretary of State, Paul Murphy, formally recognised British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) as languages in their own right. This recognition does not provide any statutory protection for the languages. Neither language is covered by the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. There has been no Executive recognition or formal Executive agreed Policy or Strategy document to date. Services for Deaf sign language users are still difficult to access, just as they were in 2004.

At that time it was estimated that BSL was the preferred language of communication of approximately 3,500 members of the Deaf population in the north of Ireland while approximately 1,500 used ISL. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) Continuous Household Survey 2013/14 reported that 9% of adults in the north could communicate using Sign Language – 8% used BSL while 1% used other Sign Languages including ISL.

Since 2004 DCAL has taken a lead role in developing the inter-departmental Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG) with the aim of improving access to services for sign language users. The SLPG was established as a forum to bring together the government Departments and key organisations representing the Deaf community to improve access to public services for sign language users. The role of chairing and providing secretariat to the SLPG falls to DCAL which has the policy remit of promoting indigenous languages.

In 2010, DCAL commissioned the 'Consultation Report on the SLPG Strategic Direction' Report through the SLPG. This report included a 10 year 'Roadmap' which outlined the steps necessary to build the infrastructure of support for ISL and BSL users and their families. This Sign Language Framework is informed by the conclusion of a review process of the Roadmap, as well as DCAL's partnership with the Deaf sector and parents of deaf children.

It is acknowledged that the building of capacity to deliver the sustainable infrastructure necessary to support ISL/BSL users and their families may require considerable financial investment in its early stages. There may be concerns in some quarters regarding such an investment in times of austerity. However, in the Programme for Government 2011-15, Priority 5: Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services it states that '*Citizens have, whether in times of recession or not, the right to expect excellent public services and value for money. As an Executive, we are acutely aware of the need to deliver, and this is why we have identified this as a priority.*'

This Framework is predicated on the need to improve access to public services for a marginalised community which has experienced generations of inequality and social

exclusion resulting from historical under investment in access to services in their own language of need.

Aims of This Framework

This Framework sets out plans over the next 5 years to help address the lack of support and historical under investment for ISL and BSL, including proposals for legislation to officially recognise, promote and protect both languages and to provide support for the parents and families of deaf children, as well as deafened individuals and their families. The Framework is underpinned by the three themes of the Roadmap, as described below, to build and safeguard a sustainable infrastructure of support for the current ISL and BSL community and their families and for future generations. The focus of this Framework is to improve access to public services for Deaf ISL/BSL users and their families, including deaf children through:

Care and Protection

Creating priorities to recognise and protect the cultural and linguistic rights of ISL and BSL users and to build the sustainable infrastructure necessary to promote and support ISL and BSL users and their families, including the supply and full access to ISL/BSL Teachers and Interpreters.

Prevention

Creating priorities that ensure future generations of deaf children and young people reach adulthood with the best chance of securing full social inclusion. This will be achieved through family-centred early interventions to provide good educational outcomes, enhanced employment prospects and health outcomes through provision of sign language as a primary or complementary communication method, including through bilingualism with spoken language.

Correction (Putting things right)

Creating priorities that increase social inclusion for the current generation of Deaf people who have left education with little academic qualifications, reduced access to training and little prospect of gaining employment or progressing in their careers by providing access to ongoing personal and social development programmes to build their knowledge and skills in their primary language creating confidence and self esteem to participate fully in their society.

Objectives of this Framework

In order to achieve these aims, the following objectives have been set over the period 2016-21:

OBJECTIVE NUMBER	OBJECTIVE DESCRIPTION
1	To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate
2	To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community
3	To provide a sustainable supply of Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators
4	To support the establishment of Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry – ‘Deaf Hubs’
5	To ensure that all public information, guidance and services are available in ISL/BSL at no additional expense to the Deaf individual – in particular public health information to redress Deaf people’s poorer health and wellbeing compared to the general population
6	To promote the beneficial effects of ISL/BSL as a family-centred early intervention for deaf children, including in a bilingual environment with spoken language; including provision of free Family Sign Language ISL/BSL classes to deaf children, their parents/guardians, siblings and grandparents
7	To provide for the continuing education requirements of deaf children and young people from pre-school through to third level education through the medium of ISL/BSL
8	To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate
9	To provide personal and social development programmes to redress the educational under-achievement of Deaf people

Key Areas for Action

The following key areas for action have been identified to contribute towards the achievement of the Framework's objectives:

- Family – Early Intervention
- Education
- Sign Language and the Community
- Public Services and Interpreting
- Media and Technology
- Economic Life
- Legislation

Implementation of the Framework

The implementation of this Framework will be taken forward through the Sign Language Partnership Group by Departments in partnership with key stakeholders, including key Deaf organisations as representatives of the ISL/BSL community.

PART 1: STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND VISION

Strategic Context

- 1.1 In March 2004 the then British Secretary of State, Paul Murphy, formally recognised British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) as languages in their own right. DCAL chaired Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG) was established in 2004 under the DCAL policy area of promoting indigenous languages.
- 1.2 The SLPG is a forum that brings together the Executive departments and key organisations representing the Deaf community. Its aim is to improve access to services for ISL/BSL users. In 2010 it commissioned the 'Consultation Report on the SLPG Strategic Direction' Report which included a 10 year Roadmap to build the infrastructure necessary to support ISL and BSL users and their families.
- 1.3 This Framework includes some of the recommendations and conclusions of the review process of the Roadmap which included consultations with the various Executive Departments. The Roadmap and its Review Report have been shared with Executive Ministers and the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee.
- 1.4 The Framework is also informed by DCAL's partnership with key Deaf organisations, including post project evaluations of DCAL funded programmes, pilot schemes and projects relevant to the aims of this Framework and by our work with parents of deaf children. We have also taken onboard some of the recommendations from the Department of Education's 'Languages for the Future – Northern Ireland Languages Strategy' and DHSSPS 'Early Years Intervention for Deaf Children in Northern Ireland Conference' Report by the British Deaf Association and the National Deaf Children's Society.
- 1.5 In 2013 the role and funding priorities for the SLPG were expanded to reflect DCAL's number one priority of Promoting Equality and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion (PETPSE). It is the need to tackle the higher levels of inequitable access to public services and information which are the main contributors to the harmful social exclusion experienced by Deaf people that is at the core of this Framework.
- 1.6 This Framework seeks to tackle the marginalisation, poorer health and wellbeing and disadvantage experienced by the Deaf Sign Language community. It therefore reflects the aims of the Executive's Programme for Government 2011-15, published on 12 March 2012, recognising the importance of local people setting the priorities for the future to deliver a shared and better future for all our people, in particular through:

Priority 2: Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Wellbeing

Priority 3: Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities

Priority 4: Building a Strong and Shared Community

Priority 5: Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services

- 1.7 As of 2012, 38 countries had given legal status to their national sign languages in some form¹. In September 2015, the Scottish Parliament approved the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2007) explicitly refers to sign languages. It binds States to recognise national sign languages and provide more Deaf teachers.
- 1.8 Deaf people have to rely on protections provided through Disability and Equality legislation. In other words, they have to declare themselves as disabled to secure reasonable adjustments. No other linguistic minority has to do this to be able to access services in their own language.

Vision

- 1.9 Central to this Framework are the proposals for draft legislation to safeguard ISL/BSL users' rights as a cultural and linguistic minority to be able to access services in their own language as outlined in Annex B. In every effort to improve Deaf people's human rights, the removal of linguistic barriers is of paramount importance. A Deaf person must have the right to use Sign Language in any given situation. Communication, participation and access to services should not be a privilege but a basic right.
- 1.10 This Framework will aim to promote respect and understanding of ISL and BSL across all sections of our community. It is only by promoting Deaf culture that the hearing community and service providers can understand the sense of identity that Sign Language brings to a Deaf person.

¹ British Deaf Association Legal Status for ISL and BSL Discussion Paper

- 1.11 There are many examples of Deaf people with good spoken and/or written English language explaining their feelings of being outsiders in society. Although they could communicate with hearing people they did not feel part of that world. As they could not sign they did not feel part of the Deaf community either despite their deafness. It was only when they learned to communicate through Sign Language that they experienced the sense of belonging that was missing.
- 1.12 Identity is a complex issue but language plays a key role in defining who we are and our sense of cultural belonging. In the same way that the use of language, both spoken and signed, can highlight our individual identity, spoken and signed language diversity can be of benefit to all society as an affirmation of our collective identity. The British Deaf Association (BDA) describes Sign Language as *'not just a language, it is also a gateway to learning, a path to towards a sense of Deaf identity, and a means whereby Deaf people survive and flourish in a hearing world'*.
- 1.13 The BDA in its BDA Legal Status for ISL and BSL Discussion Paper also states that *'Deaf culture is nested with sign language and cultural and community heritage. The importance of heritage for Deaf people and sign language communities is that it creates a link to the past and a space and sense of belonging'*. This Framework presents the case Deaf linguistic and cultural identity should be afforded the same rights as spoken language and cultures. Only then can we affirm our collective identity as an inclusive and forward-thinking society.
- 1.13 This Framework does not belong to DCAL. Its vision, presented through its aims and objectives, belong to everyone in a truly inclusive society but particularly those from the Deaf Sign Language community and their families who have been socially excluded over generations. It acknowledges that a collaborative and effective response is required from all Executive Departments, and the Executive, to deliver the sustainable infrastructure outlined in this document. The Framework is creative and innovative and reflects the ideals of co-design and partnership that the SLPG was established to deliver in order to improve access to public services for Deaf Sign Language users. It is a 'cradle to the grave' Framework of support for our Deaf Sign Language community.

PART 2: AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Aims of the Framework

- 2.1 This Framework will attempt to redress the historical under-investment in ISL and BSL users in the north of Ireland It will achieve this by realising the following aims:

Aim 1 Care and Protection

Creating priorities to recognise and protect the cultural and linguistic rights of ISL and BSL users and to build the sustainable infrastructure necessary to promote and support ISL and BSL users and their families, including the supply and full access to ISL/BSL Teachers and Interpreters.

Aim 2 Prevention

Creating priorities that ensure future generations of deaf children and young people reach adulthood with the best chance of securing full social inclusion. This will be achieved through family-centred early interventions to provide good educational outcomes, enhanced employment prospects and health outcomes through provision of sign language as a primary or complementary communication method, including through bilingualism with spoken language.

Aim 3 Correction (Putting things right)

Creating priorities that increase social inclusion for the current generation of Deaf people who have left education with little academic qualifications, reduced access to training and little prospect of gaining employment or progressing in their careers by providing access to ongoing personal and social development programmes to build their knowledge and skills in their primary language creating confidence and self esteem to participate fully in their society.

Objectives of the Framework

2.2 In order to implement each of the three aims of the Framework, the following objectives and key areas for action need to be addressed as outlined below:

AIM 1

Care and Protection

Creating priorities to recognise and protect the cultural and linguistic rights of ISL and BSL users and to build the sustainable infrastructure necessary to promote and support ISL and BSL users and their families, including the supply and full access to ISL/BSL Teachers and Interpreters.

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|--------------------|---|
| Objective 1 | To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate. |
| Objective 2 | To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community |
| Objective 3 | To provide a sustainable supply of Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators |
| Objective 4 | To support the establishment of Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry – ‘Deaf Hubs’ |
| Objective 5 | To ensure that all public information, guidance and services are available in ISL/BSL at no additional expense to the Deaf individual – in particular public health information to redress Deaf people’s poorer health and wellbeing compared to the general population |
| Objective 8 | To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate |
| Objective 9 | To provide personal and social development programmes to redress the educational under-achievement of Deaf people |

AIM 2

Prevention

Creating priorities that ensure future generations of deaf children and young people reach adulthood with the best chance of securing full social inclusion. This will be achieved through family-centred early interventions to provide good educational outcomes, enhanced employment prospects and health outcomes through provision of sign language as a primary or complementary communication method, including through bilingualism with spoken language.

- Objective 1** To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate.
- Objective 2** To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community
- Objective 3** To provide a sustainable supply of Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators
- Objective 6** To promote the beneficial effects of ISL/BSL as a family-centred early intervention for deaf children, including in a bilingual environment with spoken language; including provision of free Family Sign Language ISL/BSL classes to deaf children, their parents/guardians, siblings and grandparents
- Objective 7** To provide for the continuing education requirements of deaf children and young people from pre-school through to third level education through the medium of ISL/BSL
- Objective 8** To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate

AIM 3

Correction (Putting things right)

Creating priorities that increase social inclusion for the current generation of Deaf people who have left education with little academic qualifications, reduced access to training and little prospect of gaining employment or progressing in their careers by providing access to ongoing personal and social development programmes to build their knowledge and skills in their primary language creating confidence and self esteem to participate fully in their society.

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| Objective 9 | To provide personal and social development programmes to redress the educational under-achievement of Deaf people |

Strategic Outcomes

2.3 The main outcomes of the implementation of this Framework will include:

- Full access to public services through building of a sustainable infrastructure of support for Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language users and their families
- Formal recognition and protection of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language enshrined in legislation
- Better life outcomes for current and future generations of deaf children
- Increased numbers of households using Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language as a means of communication

- Increased positive attitudes towards Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language, particularly among the hearing community resulting in increased social inclusion for the Deaf community.

PART 3: KEY AREAS for ACTION

3.1 This Framework sets out key areas for action under seven key areas:

- Family – Early Intervention
- Education
- Sign Language and the Community
- Public Services and Interpreting
- Media and Technology
- Economic Life
- Legislation

3.2 The key areas for action are discussed in detail in the following pages. Delivery in each area will contribute towards the achievement of one or more of this Framework's objectives. The alignment of the aims, objectives and areas for action is shown in Annex A.

KEY AREAS FOR ACTION

Family – Early Intervention

- Objective 1** To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate
- Objective 2** To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community
- Objective 3** To provide a sustainable supply of Regulated Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators
- Objective 6** To promote the beneficial effects of ISL/BSL as a family-centred early intervention for deaf children, including in a bilingual environment with spoken language; including provision of free Family Sign Language ISL/BSL classes to deaf children, their parents/guardians, siblings and grandparents
- Objective 7** To provide for the continuing education requirements of deaf children and young people from pre-school through to third level education through the medium of ISL/BSL

3.3 One of the aims of the Framework is Prevention. Although deaf children of Deaf parents account for only 10% of the deaf child population (this is a generally accepted traditional figure although more recent informal research appears to suggest that the figure is likely to be nearer to 5%), studies have shown that they perform consistently better than deaf children of hearing parents.²

3.4 In examining 208 studies of over 170,000 Deaf people, Braden (1994) noted that Deaf children born to Deaf parents scored consistently higher on non-verbal tests than deaf children of hearing parents. Studies of mental health incidences show that deaf children of hearing parents have a higher number of referrals, almost double, in comparison to deaf children with Deaf parents. Much of this is attributed to the deaf child having full access to a rich and fluent language environment with Deaf parents providing rich, natural conversational interaction.³

² DHSSPS funded Early Years Intervention for Deaf Children in Northern Ireland Conference Report by BDA/NDCS

³ DHSSPS funded Early Years Intervention for Deaf Children in Northern Ireland Conference Report by BDA/NDCS

- 3.5 The family is the most important influence on a child's life. It is fundamental to their emotional and intellectual development. For deaf children the influence of families is arguably even more important than a hearing child, as incidental learning is minimal for a deaf child so skills and language have to be consciously taught⁴. Various studies have linked positive communication strategies to both emotional health and wellbeing and academic attainment.⁵
- 3.6 Research demonstrates that the development of effective communication and language skills is paramount for achieving successful emotional development and learning for all children. Deaf children typically start their early education without having the same level of language skills and vocabulary as their hearing peers, placing them at a substantial disadvantage in their early education, where the development of literacy and numeracy skills will help shape their future academic achievements and employment prospects. Yoshinago-Itano (2003) and subsequent studies replicating this study clearly demonstrate that where there was early intervention to help develop communication skills and improve vocabulary, deaf children acquired language and communication skills proportionate to those of their hearing peers⁶.
- 3.7 DCAL's funding of the National Deaf Children's Society's (NDCS) Family Sign Language courses over the past number of years has highlighted both the high demand for such courses from families with a deaf child and, the beneficial effects of such early intervention sign language. Post project evaluations highlighted not only the improved communication between hearing family members and the deaf child but also the substantial reduction in stress levels within the family as the frustrations that accompany communication barriers are reduced.
- 3.8 To meet a demand from parents of deaf children and, as a natural progression to the Family Sign Language courses, DCAL has also piloted BSL Level 1 and 2 classes for parents of deaf children. These aid the continuing linguistic development of the parents to help them continue to fulfil their role as a child's first teacher in order to help their child develop linguistically and to enhance familial communication. As previously stated, deaf children do not benefit from incidental learning to the same degree as hearing children so skills and language have to be consciously taught and parents must have access to the tools to deliver this.
- 3.9 With the benefit of a growing body research such as those outlined at the World Congress on mental Health and Deafness and, the post project evaluations

⁴ National Deaf Children's Society

⁵ Bouvet, 1990; Gibson, 1994; Evans, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995

⁶ National Deaf Children's Society

from DCAL funded Family Sign Language classes as outlined above, it would be inappropriate to continue with the status quo of an ad hoc approach to providing families with the skills to communicate through sign language. All families with deaf children should have access to age specific ISL/BSL classes as necessary. This should be viewed as an investment in the deaf child, their families and the public purse as research demonstrates such early interventions can deliver better life outcomes which will reduce the need for interventions later in life.

Education

- Objective 1** To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate
- Objective 2** To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community
- Objective 3** To provide a sustainable supply of Regulated Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators
- Objective 5** To ensure that all public information, guidance and services are available in ISL/BSL at no additional expense to the Deaf individual – in particular public health information to redress Deaf people’s poorer health and wellbeing compared to the general population
- Objective 6** To promote the beneficial effects of ISL/BSL as a family-centred early intervention for deaf children, including in a bilingual environment with spoken language; including provision of free Family Sign Language ISL/BSL classes to deaf children, their parents/guardians, siblings and grandparents
- Objective 7** To provide for the continuing education requirements of deaf children and young people from pre-school through to third level education through the medium of ISL/BSL
- Objective 8** To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate

3.10 It is widely accepted that the cognitive ability of the child, maternal level of education, socio-economic status and the age of the child when intervention is offered all impact on the quality of long term outcomes for deaf children. A

review of post 2000 research undertaken on behalf of NDCS revealed considerable consensus that improved outcomes are evident when a range of other crucial factors exists in unison such as early identification is followed by timely and appropriate intervention.⁷ With the early intervention of Family Sign Language classes, deaf children can start their early education with the same level of language skills and vocabulary as their hearing peers providing the opportunity to academically achieve on a par with their hearing peers.

Children of Deaf Adults (CODAS)/Deaf Parents

- 3.11 Education plays a pivotal role in both the academic achievement of children and young people but also the development and production of essential service providers across all professions and sectors of society. It is not only deaf children that will benefit from the successful delivery of the outcomes of this Framework but the Children of Deaf Adults (CODAS) many of whom will be hearing children. Such children are largely bilingual and bicultural due to the family environment in which they were raised.
- 3.12 Schools should have regard to the need for key written information about children being made available in a suitable sign language friendly medium. The BDA with DCAL funding has produced 'Effective Working with Deaf Parents: Guidelines for Education Professionals' which covers key areas such as home/school communication, use of interpreters and homework support among other topics.

Pre-School

- 3.13 In order to build on this opportunity it is vital that such sign language support and development is continued through pre-school in to primary school and secondary school and in to third level education where appropriate. Pre-schools play a vital role in the social and academic development of children. Deaf children through lack of adequate communication support are more likely to miss out on the opportunities presented by pre-school. The development of ISL/BSL medium pre-schools or availability of adequately trained pre-school teachers and assistants would present deaf children with full access to the education experience from an early age and augment the acquired signing skills of their families through Family Sign Language classes.
- 3.14 Such specialised pre-schools for deaf children could benefit from the Department of Education's Education Support Clusters as set out in Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning which targets

⁷ DHSSPS funded Early Years Intervention for Deaf Children in Northern Ireland Conference Report by BDA/NDCS

barriers to learning, including actions aimed at refocusing the use of extended schools funding to help identify and address under-developed social, emotional and communication skills. This could include Sign Language medium pre-schools or pre-schools with a sign language specialism for deaf children.

Primary and Post Primary Education

3.15 In order to have the same rights, responsibilities, opportunities and quality of life as everyone else, education through the medium of Sign must be provided to users of sign language(s). Children who use Sign as their first language often do not have access to their linguistic medium. It is a matter of urgency that this is addressed. This further requires that adequate training and professionalism of Teachers for the Deaf be provided. The acceptance of Sign as an appropriate language for use in education signifies its value in the wider world.⁸

3.16 *No hearing community would tolerate their children being educated solely by those who cannot communicate with or understand their children. Yet Deaf children with normal cognitive ability are expected to function in just this environment.*⁹ Without continued sign language intervention throughout their education there is a high probability that the deaf child will struggle academically.

3.17 In addition to such intervention for deaf children, sign language can also be introduced to hearing children at primary and secondary school levels. A BSL GCSE is currently being piloted in England which presents the opportunity that it could be added to curriculum in schools in the north of Ireland. The PGCE course for Deaf ISL/BSL Teachers in the University of Ulster presents the ideal opportunity to develop this initiative with schools which have accepted placements of these PGCE student teachers and may choose to specialise in BSL or ISL. Such mainstreaming of sign language in schools would have the dual benefits of improving the academic achievement and life outcomes of deaf students plus creating a potential pool of future tutors of sign language and interpreters which would build a sustainable infrastructure of support for ISL/BSL users.

Further Education Colleges

3.18 The DCAL funding of BSL Level 1 and 2 classes for parents of deaf children originated from the concerns of parents of deaf children that Further Education (FE) Colleges did not meet their needs for Family Sign Language learning. The first issue is the cost of the classes to learn the language skills to communicate

⁸ Dept of Education commissioned 'Languages for the Future – Northern Ireland Languages Strategy'

⁹ Cited by Helga Stevens, 'Equal Rights for Deaf people: From being a stranger in one's own country to full citizenship through sign language', Lecture delivered at ICED 2005 (Maastricht 17-20 July 2005)

with their child that English speaking parents of hearing children take for granted through spoken language. Hearing children learn their first words from their parents. Their English is then developed free of charge through the education system. Deaf children live in a largely visual world where sign language is the natural communication medium. Parents of deaf children rightly argue that they should not have to pay to learn to communicate with their children.

3.19 Secondly, BSL classes at FE Colleges are formal exam based courses and, as such, are not necessarily suitable for interactions with young children and the family environment. This can be off-putting to some families who just want to acquire the ability to communicate informally with their children. The DCAL model provides for both Family Sign Language courses and more formal exam based courses however, parents have the option not to take the exams if they wish although to date in the limited pilot schemes no-one has voluntarily taken up this option.

3.20 An opportunity exists through this Framework, in consultation with all sign language providers including FE Colleges and Deaf organisations possibly based in the proposed Sign Language Cultural and Linguistic Centres, to develop a flexible programme of ISL and BSL classes tailored to the needs of individuals who seek to gain formal qualifications, the needs of deaf individuals and their families to communicate in sign and to those wishing to learn vocational to participate or volunteer in Deaf culture. To those Deaf individuals and their families such classes should be free of charge.

Third Level Education

3.21 This Framework and the infrastructure of support for the Deaf community it seeks to build, is dependent upon appropriate number of ISL/BSL Teachers qualifying to meet the demand for Sign Language classes. This will be particularly important should the numbers of ISL/BSL users increase over the years as a result of the promotion of ISL/BSL that this Framework seeks to deliver.

3.22 The provision of ISL/BSL teachers are critical to the production of ISL/BSL Interpreters who are critical to breaking down the communication barriers that Deaf people come up against daily. Extended support should be considered to ensure that an appropriate number of ISL/BSL Teachers and Interpreters qualify to meet the demands of the Deaf community and its support network.

3.23 The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has provided £1.18 million funding to provide for a ISL/BSL Level 6 Linguistics Course feeder

course at Belfast Metropolitan College towards a Masters Degree for 11 Interpreters at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and a two year Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) course for 15 Deaf ISL/BSL Teachers at University of Ulster (UU). The students participating in these courses were fully funded in their studies. DEL has made it clear that this was a one-off funding stream.

- 3.24 Given the historical levels of under-investment in the ISL/BSL infrastructure there is a very strong case that further 'free' Deaf Sign Language Teacher and Interpreter courses should be made available. There are currently approximately 40 ISL/BSL Interpreters for the north of whom 28 are registered with the National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD). There is still a considerable waiting time for Interpreters in excess of 3 weeks. There are no reliable figures for the number of ISL/BSL Teachers however the 'Languages for the Future – Northern Ireland Languages Strategy' states *we have only eight sign language tutors qualified to NVQ Level 3 and two qualified to level 4. To be in line with other European countries, there is a need for at least 40.*
- 3.25 The availability of the **15 Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)** students at UU obviously supersedes these figures. However, there is still a sizeable shortfall in numbers which may become more critical should this Framework succeed in promoting the uptake of ISL/BSL. There is also the need to regulate the quality of teaching of ISL/BSL similar to other modern language teaching.
- 3.26 There continues to be a need to incentivise the provision of ISL/BSL Teachers and Interpreters. This could be done by providing further rounds of **free Deaf Sign Language Teacher and Interpreter courses at QUB and UU**. However, this time the cost of provision of the courses would be considerably lower as the infrastructure funded by DEL is in place.
- 3.27 Additionally, **social clauses** should be inserted in the acceptance of the courses by students. These clauses would stipulate that in return for the provision of the free courses and qualifications the student agrees to provide 100 hours teaching or interpreting per year (equivalent to approximately 2 hours per week) over the first two years after graduating without charge.
- 3.28 Graduate teachers and interpreters would be assigned these hours to support the aims of this Framework to provide free ISL/BSL classes and to expand provision of interpreters for Deaf people. This would also contribute to the students' on-going need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in their profession – particularly with the introduction of regulation.

- 3.29 The development and protection of both ISL and BSL and the various medium of support and provision relies on creative and innovative ideas best achieved through partnerships. In this regard, QUB and UU will play a crucial role in partnership with key Deaf organisations to expand the knowledge base of the Deaf sector as a whole and to design and embrace modern, technological advances to present ISL/BSL as visual languages to their best effect.
- 3.31 The development of partnerships between QUB and UU and key stakeholders, including key Deaf organisations through the proposed Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry – ‘Deaf Sign Language Hubs’ – is to be encouraged. This can provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north by partnering, developing and seed funding universities in the north of Ireland to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland and Scotland and England, where appropriate. The development of links with Sign Language teaching universities in Europe and internationally is also to be encouraged to import and export best practice. This can only be of benefit to the ISL/BSL community.

Sign Language and the Community

- Objective 1** To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate
- Objective 2** To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community
- Objective 3** To provide a sustainable supply of Regulated Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators
- Objective 4** To support the establishment of Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry – ‘Deaf Hubs’
- Objective 5** To ensure that all public information, guidance and services are available in ISL/BSL at no additional expense to the Deaf individual – in particular public health information to redress Deaf people’s poorer health and wellbeing compared to the general population
- Objective 8** To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate
- Objective 9** To provide personal and social development programmes to redress the educational under-achievement of Deaf people

3.32 The establishment of Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry would be a tangible, visible presence of Sign Language culture in the heart of the community. The centres could be modelled on Deaf Village Ireland in Dublin, with the provision of social and leisure facilities to paying customers both hearing and Deaf. Additionally, such centres could develop crèche/pre-school facilities for deaf children for which there is a growing demand. Mother and toddler groups for deaf children would contribute to the promotion of Family Sign Language as a key early intervention for deaf children.

- 3.33 The centres could be run in trust form by the Deaf sector providing a wide range of social, cultural and public services. ‘Hot-desking’ provision for visiting public service providers such as community nurses, public health information presentations, social security benefits advice etc would bring public services in to the heart of the Deaf community with interpreting support available. The proposed (C)AMHS on a peripatetic basis, for deaf children and adults could also use such centres as a deaf friendly environment for their services. This would contribute to redressing the poor life outcomes of many Deaf sign language users. Such access to Deaf community for public service provided will increase understanding of and improve service delivery to the Deaf community at large.
- 3.34 Local school visits would also de-mystify some perceptions of Sign Language and break down the barriers that currently exist between the Deaf and hearing communities at a young age.
- 3.35 DCAL over the years has funded Deaf organisations to provide Deaf/Sign Language awareness sessions to the Community and Voluntary sector, schools and universities. Such interventions are invaluable to encourage positive attitudes to Sign Language and re-enforcing the message that ISL/BSL are languages in their own right and their users are a distinct cultural and linguistic community with an important role to play in our multi-cultural society. This programme should be expanded and co-ordinated through the proposed Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres
- 3.36 The development of the partnership between the universities in the north of Ireland and key stakeholders in the Deaf community through the proposed Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry – ‘Deaf Sign Language Hubs’ – would form a bridge between the Deaf community and the seats of Sign Language learning. There is a desire within both universities to develop such links through Centres for Deaf Sign Language Studies which could develop the international links of both the universities and Deaf organisations, such as the British Deaf Association as member of the World Federation for the Deaf.
- 3.37 The extension of this partnership to include Trinity College Dublin, which has worked with QUB and UU on developing ISL, and for example, the Irish Deaf Society as the BDA counterparts on the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), would help develop ISL in the north which historically has seen its numbers of users drop due to the older demographic of its users.
- 3.38 Although the direct aims, objectives and outcomes of this Framework are targeted at public service providers, it will hopefully encourage all social,

cultural and leisure providers to take steps to provide for Sign Language users in their services. Recent high profile media stories of the exclusion of Sign Language users from social events re-enforce the belief that there is a widespread misunderstanding of what Sign Language is and the needs of its users. The misconceived belief that hearing deficit is the same as reduced cognitive ability needs to be challenged through community engagement and Deaf Sign Language awareness programmes and wider access to social/cultural Sign Language classes for hearing community. The Deaf sector has a central role to play in this area.

Public Services and Interpreting/Translation

All Objectives 1-9 Apply

3.39 The Framework essentially aims to provide access to all public services for current and future generations of Deaf ISL/BSL users and their families. The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (the Charter) states that if a language is not used or visible in the political, legal or administrative sphere, *'it will gradually lose all its terminological potential in that field and become a 'handicapped' language, incapable of expressing every aspect of community life'*.¹⁰ It is therefore vital socially, culturally, morally and practically that public services cater for ISL/BSL users. All of the objectives of this Framework apply to Public Services.

3.40 Since formal recognition of ISL and BSL in 2004 and the establishment of the DCAL chaired cross-departmental Sign Language Partnership Group with the aim of improving access to services for ISL/BSL users, access to public services have improved. There are now 28 registered interpreters compared to 4 in 2004. There is greater funding for Deaf social and cultural events, provision of limited free Family Sign/ISL/BSL classes and awareness sessions. However, their provision is still ad hoc and more needs to be done.

Health

3.41 *'Deaf people's health is poorer than that of the general population, with probable under-diagnosis and under-treatment of chronic conditions putting them at risk of preventative ill health'*.¹¹ This excerpt from the British Medical Journal in 2015 is one of many pieces of research and reports that highlight the poorer wellbeing outcomes for Deaf people compared to the hearing population across a number of categories – physical health and mental health.

3.42 Various presentations at the World Congress on Mental Health and Deafness (WCMHD), Belfast 2014, from international experts in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, education, social work etc painted a recurring theme that the poorer life outcomes largely stem from *'information about these services are not provided in sign language to make them fully accessible to the Deaf Community. It is the responsibility of governments to promote access to services in sign language and they should be reminded of their duties regularly.'*

¹⁰ European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, Explanatory Note, Paragraph 101

¹¹ Emond A. *Et al. British Medical Journal Open 2015,*

Deaf persons should also be granted the opportunity to communicate in sign language at all stages of their treatment'.¹²

Legal Proceedings

- 3.43 In order to provide 'cradle to the grave' public services for the Sign Language community, services must be accessible in their 'language of need'. This requires the sustainable provision of Sign Language teachers to ensure the supply of interpreters and translators to deliver this vital information. This applies equally to legal proceedings. Provision for the use of ISL/BSL should be provided for in courts, tribunals or bodies before which legal proceedings involving a Deaf ISL/BSL user are held.
- 3.44 As previously, stated in this document our universities, in partnership with the Deaf sector and Executive departments to gain access to EU funding, can develop the creative and innovative technology to visualise and provide public information, guidance and services to the Deaf community in their own homes through widespread access to social media and internet for Deaf people accompanied by essential safeguarding information.
- 3.45 Departmental and public central procurement contracts should ensure all public information and guidance is available in ISL/BSL formats. This will enable public service providers through a range of medium such as the proposed 'Deaf hubs', remote interpreting, sign videos, ISL/BSL translations on public websites etc through to Deaf Sign Language Awareness training and ISL/BSL fingerspelling cards for front of desk staff to at least engage and direct Sign Language users to relevant personnel and information. This is particularly relevant to public health information.

¹² WCMHD Dr Liisa Kauppinen World Federation of the Deaf Honorary President and 2013 recipient of the UN Human Rights Award

Media and Technology

- Objective 1** To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate
- Objective 2** To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community
- Objective 5** To ensure that all public information, guidance and services are available in ISL/BSL at no additional expense to the Deaf individual – in particular public health information to redress Deaf people’s poorer health and wellbeing compared to the general population
- Objective 8** To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate
- Objective 9** To provide personal and social development programmes to redress the educational under-achievement of Deaf people

Broadcasting

3.46 *‘The Council of Europe asserts that the time and space which regional or minority languages can secure in the media are vital for their protection and that no language can maintain its influence unless it has access to the new forms of mass communications’.*¹³ Although ISL/BSL are not covered by the charter this applies equally to ISL/BSL as visual languages.

3.47 Although there is provision for subtitling of programmes, as explained earlier in this document, many ISL/BSL users can’t necessarily understand written English with the same fluency as hearing people. That subtitles (Subtitles provide a transcript of the TV soundtrack, helping deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers to follow programmes. Subtitles have been available since the early 1980s) appear on the screen for a short period of time before progressing to a next passage of conversation or dialogue compounds the difficulties.

¹³ European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, Explanatory Note, Paragraph 107

3.48 The BBC state that it aims to subtitle all BBC TV programmes. The Communications Act 2003 empowers the BBC to make and amend the terms and conditions of a TV licence. It allows the government to make regulations to exempt or reduce the licence fee for certain persons in certain circumstances. Concessions are available for people who are blind (severely sight impaired), people who are over 74 years of age, people who live in residential care and people who run hotels, guesthouses or campsites. There is no exemption for Deaf people who report limited quality access to television programmes due to limited signing translations and varying ability to follow subtitles in context. Any licence fees exemption or concessions is a reserved matter and therefore does not fall under the control of the NI Assembly.

Online and Social Media

3.49 Many Sign Language users, particularly younger generation, use social media and visual web based appliances such as Skype and Oovoo to communicate. These are a vital way for the Deaf community to keep in touch and access information. There has been a growing demand among Sign Language users of all ages to access IT classes in order to tap in to this social technology. Access to this technology also presents the opportunity to provide remote interpreting to Sign Language users while they access services either in their home, during public service appointments or in 'visual pods' in the proposed 'Deaf Hubs'. Banks and Building Societies provide financial services appointments with advisors based in England or Scotland via web-based connections on screen in offices based in the north. Deaf hubs could provide the same facility for various public services appointments with interpreter support.

3.50 Support needs to be provided to Sign Language users to access IT classes with appropriate safeguarding guidance to help them join in what is a vital tool in tackling the social exclusion they experience. It would also enhance their access to vital public services information. Deaf organisations keep a database of either members or users of their services and this resource could be used to identify and provide such a personal development programme. Consideration should also be given to the priority provision of IT hardware to Sign Language users to encourage this technological response to tackling social exclusion.

Economic Life

All Objectives 1 -9 Apply

- 3.52 Deaf Sign Languages users experience higher levels of unemployment than their hearing peers while there are considerably higher levels of Deaf young adults not in education, employment or training (NEET). The key to improving these trends and increasing the contribution to economic life of the Sign Language community is access to Education in the medium of Sign Language and promoting positive attitudes to ISL/BSL users among society in general but among employers in particular.
- 3.53 The creation of the proposed 'Deaf Hubs', whilst providing employment for Deaf people within the centres, will also provide work experience for Deaf young people to launch in to wider society. Regular co-ordinated programmes of Deaf friendly work fairs and engagement with employers should be launched such as those currently being undertaken by Action Deaf Youth and the British Deaf Association. The programme of transition from school to employment or training for young Deaf adults should be resourced and expanded. Employers should be encouraged to offer work experience or placements to Deaf young people and adults. Re-training and IT classes should be provided to Deaf adults to increase their employability.
- 3.54 In 2013 and 2014 two international Deaf Sign Language Conferences were held at Queen's University attracting in excess of 500 delegates from Ireland, UK, Europe and around the world. These conferences provided a boost to the local Belfast services and hospitality economy.
- 3.55 The World Federation of the Deaf which is the lead Deaf organisation to over 90 million Deaf people worldwide held its World Congress in Istanbul in summer 2015 attracted 1300 participants from around the world. Such an event should be encouraged and supported in Belfast. It would not only give a boost to the local economy but would, alongside the acceptance of the Framework, announce the north as a global exemplar for promotion and protection of Sign Language rights. It would also confirm Belfast as a leading 'City of Access' within the European Union thereby increasing the profile of the north to Deaf tourists.
- 3.56 Support should be provided for our universities to access both local research and development funding streams and also EU funding for the development of new assistive technologies to support, teach and promote ISL/BSL such as the various Apps and devices being developed through the PGCE course for

ISL/BSL teachers at University of Ulster. Both universities should also be supported to develop their partnerships with like-minded universities in Ireland, UK, Europe and beyond. This would tap in to the potential for development of Deaf friendly services and technologies for the 90 million Deaf people worldwide in terms of income- generation from their innovations which may be applicable to the Deaf community worldwide.

Legislation

Objective 1 applies

It is proposed that legislation will provide for:

- 3.57 A Deaf person's right to use Sign Language in any given situation. Communication, participation and access to services should not be a privilege but a basic right.

- 3.58 Promoting of respect and understanding of ISL and BSL across all sections of our community. It is only by promoting Deaf culture that the hearing community and service providers can understand the sense of identity that Sign Language brings to a Deaf person.

- 3.59 A Requirement for Departments to work with key stakeholders to build the infrastructure necessary to support Deaf ISL/BSL users, including a sustainable supply of ISL/BSL Teachers, Interpreters and Translators.

- 3.60 The provision of free Family Sign language courses for the parents and families of deaf children.

- 3.61 Safeguarding the rights of the current and future generations of ISL/BSL users as a cultural and linguistic minority to access services in their own language.

- 3.62 A requirement for Departments to produce action plans to help deliver this Framework.

PART 4: IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 In recognition that this Framework can only succeed with cross-departmental support and resources, the implementation and monitoring of this Framework will be taken forward by the Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG). The SLPG will have representatives from all Executive Departments who will bring Departmental implementation plans for agreement to deliver the Framework. The SLPG will also have representation from key Deaf organisations and will be expanded to include QUB and University of Ulster as the key seats of learning for ISL/BSL Teachers, Interpreters and Translators. Other strategic partners will be co-opted on to the SLPG as the SLPG sees fit.
- 4.2 The Minister with responsibility for indigenous languages and cultural diversity will assume special responsibility for oversight and delivery of the Strategy and its legislation.
- 4.3 Departments will publish implementation plans and monitoring reports setting out how they are delivering against the Framework's aims, objectives and areas for action.
- 4.4 Departments will be responsible for communicating this Framework's aims and objectives to their arms length bodies and other public bodies that they support. Where applicable, Departments will liaise with their bodies in order for them to contribute towards delivering the aims and objectives of this Strategy.
- 4.5 This is a comprehensive Framework that seeks to build the infrastructure of support for current and future generations of Sign Language users and their families. As such, it will require staged interventions and resourcing over a 5 year period.

Review and Revision

- 4.5 The Framework will be kept under review and may be revised or replaced.

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SIGN LANGUAGE FRAMEWORK AIMS, OBJECTIVES & PRIORITY FOR ACTION

AIMS	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITIES for ACTION
<p>Care and Protection</p> <p>Creating priorities to recognise and protect the cultural and linguistic rights of ISL and BSL users and to build the sustainable infrastructure necessary to promote and support ISL and BSL users and their families, including the supply and full access to ISL/BSL Teachers and Interpreters.</p>	<p>Objective 1 To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate.</p> <p>Objective 2 To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community</p> <p>Objective 3 To provide a sustainable supply of Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators</p> <p>Objective 4 To support the establishment of Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry – ‘Deaf Hubs’</p> <p>Objective 5 To ensure that all public information, guidance and services are available in ISL/BSL at no additional expense to the Deaf individual – in particular public health information to redress Deaf people’s poorer health and wellbeing compared to the general population</p> <p>Objective 8 To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland</p>	<p>Family – Early Intervention</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Sign Language and the Community</p> <p>Public Services and Interpreting/Translation</p> <p>Media and Technology</p> <p>Economic Life</p> <p>Legislation</p>

	<p>by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate</p> <p>Objective 9 To provide personal and social development programmes to redress the educational under-achievement of Deaf people</p>	
<p>Prevention</p> <p>Creating priorities that ensure future generations of deaf children and young people reach adulthood with the best chance of securing full social inclusion. This will be achieved through family-centred early interventions to provide good educational outcomes, enhanced employment prospects and health outcomes through provision of sign language as a primary or complementary communication method, including through bilingualism with spoken language.</p>	<p>Objective 1 To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate</p> <p>Objective 2 To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community</p> <p>Objective 3 To provide a sustainable supply of Sign Language Teachers, Sign Language Interpreters and Translators</p> <p>Objective 6 To promote the beneficial effects of ISL/BSL as a family-centred early intervention for deaf children, including in a bilingual environment with spoken language; including provision of free Family Sign Language ISL/BSL classes to deaf children, their parents/guardians, siblings and grandparents</p> <p>Objective 7 To provide for the continuing education requirements of deaf children and young people from pre-school through to third level</p>	<p>Family – Early Intervention</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Sign Language and the Community</p> <p>Public Services and Interpreting/Translation</p> <p>Economic Life</p> <p>Legislation</p>

	<p>Objective 8</p> <p>education through the medium of ISL/BSL</p> <p>To provide a sustainable model of expertise, knowledge, research, innovation and teaching of ISL/BSL in the north of Ireland by partnering, developing and funding our local universities to access EU funding streams in partnership with Sign Language teaching universities in the south of Ireland, Scotland and England, where appropriate</p>	
<p>Correction (Putting things right)</p> <p>Creating priorities that increase social inclusion for the current generation of Deaf people who have left education with little academic qualifications, reduced access to training and little prospect of gaining employment or progressing in their careers by providing access to ongoing personal and social development programmes to build their knowledge and skills in their primary language creating confidence and self esteem to participate fully in their society.</p>	<p>Objective 1</p> <p>To increase positive attitudes, respect, understanding and tolerance for ISL/BSL by introducing a legislative framework by the end of the next Assembly mandate</p> <p>Objective 2</p> <p>To develop sustainable and quality Departmental ISL/BSL Plans in consultation with the Deaf community</p> <p>Objective 4</p> <p>To support the establishment of Deaf Cultural and Linguistic Centres in Belfast and Derry – ‘Deaf Hubs’</p> <p>Objective 5</p> <p>To ensure that all public information, guidance and services are available in ISL/BSL at no additional expense to the Deaf individual – in particular public health information to redress Deaf people’s poorer health and wellbeing compared to the general population</p> <p>Objective 9</p> <p>To provide personal and social development programmes to redress the educational</p>	<p>Sign Language and the Community</p> <p>Public Services and Interpreting/Translation</p> <p>Media and Technology</p> <p>Economic Life</p> <p>Legislation</p>

	under-achievement of Deaf people	
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PROPOSALS FOR AN IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE AND BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE BILL

Recognition, protection and promotion of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language

- Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language to be recognised and defined as Official Languages in the north in such a way as to guarantee services through Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language on a par with those available through English.
- The Deaf community of persons using Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language shall have the right to use, develop and preserve Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language, as well as to develop Deaf culture.

Minister with Special Responsibility

- Designate that the Minister with responsibility for the promotion of the indigenous languages of the north, being the Minister for the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, shall have assigned special responsibility in relation to the oversight and exercise of the functions under this legislation.

Functions of Executive Ministers in relation to Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language

Functions will include the requirement:

- To set down principles to guide the operations of public bodies; making provision for the preparation, publication and implementation of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language Plans to execute their functions under this Act.
- Executive Ministers are to promote, and facilitate the promotion of, the protection of, the use and understanding of the sign languages known as Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language in the exercise of their functions.

To provide for free classes for parents, siblings and grandparents of deaf children.

- Provide for a scheme to ensure free Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language classes to:
 - (a) parents, siblings, grandparents of a child who is deaf, and
 - (b) other persons who serve *in loco parentis* or as a guardian to a child who is deaf.

To provide for free classes for deafened individuals and their immediate family members.

- Provision to establish a scheme for the provision of free Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language classes to –
 - (a) children, parents, siblings, grandparents of an individual who becomes deafened, and
 - (b) other persons who serve *in loco parentis* or as a guardian to an individual who becomes deafened.

Use of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language in Legal Proceedings

- Provision that in legal proceedings an Irish Sign Language and/or British Sign Language interpretation service to be provided for Deaf people where Irish Sign Language or British Sign Language is their primary or preferred language of use at no inconvenience or additional expense to the individual.

Provision of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language Interpreting

- Requirement that Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language interpreters to be provided, where necessary in accessing public services, at no inconvenience or additional expense to the Deaf individual.

Regulation of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language Interpreters and Teachers

- Regulations may provide for the regulation of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language interpreters and teachers in the north.
- Regulations may provide for the duty of registered Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language interpreters and teachers to demonstrate professional competence and to maintain professional competence.

Education

- Provision for the continuing educational requirements of deaf children and young people through provision of Irish Sign Language and British Sign Language and to provide for related matters.