

Working with a BSL/English interpreter

About this factsheet

This factsheet is part of RNID's **communication** range. It is written for people who would like to find out more about using BSL/English interpreters. We use the term deaf people to refer to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people throughout this factsheet.

Read this factsheet to find out about:

- What do BSL/English interpreters do?
- About video interpreting.
- When to use an interpreter.
- Tips for working with interpreters.
- Booking an interpreter.
- How much they charge.
- Help with paying for interpreters.

At the end of this factsheet we give you details of organisations you can contact for further information.

If you would like this factsheet on audio tape, in braille or in large print, fill in the *Want to know more?* form at the end of this factsheet and send it to RNID.

What do BSL/English interpreters do?

A BSL/English interpreter can make it easier for a deaf sign language user and a hearing person to communicate with each other. They interpret from one language to the other. In the UK this will usually be

from British Sign Language (BSL) to spoken or written English, or spoken or written English to BSL.

BSL/English interpreters are used by deaf people:

- whose first or preferred language is BSL or
- who use Sign Supported English (SSE).

Video interpreting

Although most interpreting is done face-to-face, some organisations, including RNID, now offer a video interpreting service. The interpreter is not present in the room with you but instead they sign and interpret for the deaf person and the hearing person via a videophone.

Video interpreting has been set up to try and overcome the difficulties many people have in getting an interpreter at short notice or for short appointments or meetings. It is not a replacement for face-to-face interpreting, but it does give deaf and hearing people greater access to interpreting services.

You need a videolink and an ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) or IP (Internet Protocol) connection to use the video interpreting service. See RNID's factsheet, *Videophones – information for deaf and hard of hearing people*, for more information about buying and using a videophone.

When to use an interpreter

An interpreter is useful whenever deaf sign language users and hearing people need to communicate with each other, for example:

- Visiting your GP (family doctor).
- At a hospital appointment.

- Meetings and conferences.
- Work meetings and training.
- Job interviews.
- College or university.

Video interpreting is particularly useful for short meetings or appointments up to 30 minutes long. It is not suitable in sensitive situations where a misunderstanding could have serious results, for example during legal, disciplinary or child protection meetings.

Tips for working with interpreters

Working with interpreters face-to-face

An interpreter interprets from one language into another. This means that interpreting is mentally and physically demanding work. Interpreters need a break after about half an hour, although in practice they often work for up to one hour. They should not be expected to work through lunch and coffee breaks, unless this has been agreed with them.

It is a good idea to send the interpreter or the agency copies of any papers, teaching materials or other information at least two weeks before the assignment so that they know what to expect and can prepare.

How many interpreters should I book?

You normally only need one interpreter for short assignments. However, if you are planning a half-day or longer meeting, you should consider booking two interpreters. Most interpreters prefer to work with another interpreter for meetings that are more than two hours.

If you only use one interpreter in longer assignments they will need breaks throughout the assignment, and the assignment will have to stop during these breaks. Two interpreters working together can take turns during the assignment with fewer, if any, breaks. You can ask the interpreter or agency for advice when making your booking.

Working with a video interpreter

Before using a video interpreter you will need to make sure your videophone equipment is installed and working correctly.

For the best picture quality, the background behind the videophone should be as plain as possible. Make sure that people are not moving around in the background. Good lighting is also important to avoid shadows or silhouettes. You may need to sign or speak slightly slower than usual when using a video interpreter.

Booking an interpreter

Interpreting is a recognised profession and interpreters train for many years. They need a good level of English, relevant qualifications in BSL and should have completed approved interpreter training. You should use someone who is registered by the Independent Registration Panel (IRP) with the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) as a:

- Junior Trainee Interpreter (JTI) (previously included under the category, Registered Trainee Interpreter) *or* a
- Trainee Interpreter (TI) (previously called a Registered Trainee Interpreter) *or* a
- Member of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters (MRSLI) (previously called a RQI).

The table below summaries the current categories of BSL/English interpreters:

Categories up to April 2002	Categories April 2002 onwards
Registered Qualified Interpreter (RQI)	Member of the Register of BSL/English Interpreters (MRSLI)
Registered Trainee Interpreter (RTI)	Trainee Interpreter (TI)
	Junior Trainee Interpreter (JTI)

You should make sure that the interpreter has the right qualifications and necessary experience for the assignment. For example, for a legal or mental health situation, try to book someone who knows about special terms that may be used. You should ask for advice when making the booking.

You should not expect to use someone who only has basic sign language skills to interpret for you.

The Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) and the IRP have a leaflet, *The New Registration System for BSL/English interpreters*, that you may find useful (See *Where to book interpreters* for contact details).

Booking an interpreter

You can book a face-to-face interpreter in two ways:

- Through an agency or
- Directly with a freelance interpreter – someone who works for themselves.

Booking an interpreter through an agency

If you book an interpreter through an agency you will be charged a booking fee and travel costs. The agency will also have a minimum call-out charge. This means that you will be charged for a minimum amount of time, for example two hours, even if you only use the interpreter for one hour. Check the minimum call-out charge before you book.

Agencies should also have minimum standards for interpreters they work with and should use interpreters who are MRSLIs, TIs or JTIs (see earlier, *Booking an interpreter*).

Agencies have access to a large number of interpreters so you are more likely to get someone when you need them if you book with an agency. You can always ask the agency for someone you have already worked with but if that person is busy you may need to use someone else.

A shortage of interpreters means they are in great demand, so you should book as soon as you know you will need one – at least four to six weeks in advance, if possible. If you need one in an emergency, tell the interpreter or agency and they will try their best to help you.

Booking a freelance interpreter

You will find details of freelance interpreters in the CACDP Directory (see *Where to book interpreters* for contact details). You should contact freelance interpreters directly to see if they can interpret for you. They may have a minimum call-out charge and will charge travel costs. Check this before you book.

It is generally better to contact interpreters who are in your area first as this will reduce their travel costs

Booking a video interpreter

Anyone with access to a videolink and an ISDN or IP connection can book a video interpreter. At the moment RNID is one of several organisations in the UK providing a video interpreting service (see *Where to book interpreters*).

It is possible to access a video interpreter at very short notice but you can also book in advance.

Code of Practice

Junior Trainee Interpreters, Trainee Interpreters and MRSLIs have a strict Code of Ethics and everything that is said in an assignment is strictly confidential. They cannot give advice or opinions whilst working with you.

How much they charge

Interpreter's costs, travel expenses and minimum call-out charges vary, so it is best to check these when you book.

Help with paying for interpreters

If you are deaf or deafblind you usually won't have to pay for communication support you need. The following tells you about the different ways there are to pay for interpreters.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

The DDA may require service providers such as hospitals and GP surgeries to provide communication support. If you do need an interpreter, let them know in plenty of time. For further information, see our factsheet, *The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – a guide for deaf and hard of hearing customers*.

Help for students

If you are a student, you may be able to get help to pay for communication support or your education provider may have to provide it. For more information, see our factsheets:

- *Benefits and allowances – information for deaf and hard of hearing students aged 19 and over.*
- *Deaf and hard of hearing students in Further Education – your rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.*
- *Deaf and hard of hearing students in Higher Education – your rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.*

Disability Living Allowance

You may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) if you need help to communicate with other people. See our factsheet, *Disability Living Allowance – information for deaf and hard of hearing people.*

Access to work

The Government's Access to Work scheme may help to pay for communication support you need at work or, if you are unemployed, for interviews. For more information, see our factsheet, *Information for deaf people in work or looking for work.*

You can contact the RNID Information Line for more information about help with paying for communication support.

Where to book interpreters

RNID Communication Services

RNID Communication Services can book interpreters for you in your area:

Central

Tel: 01296 392 294. Textphone: 01296 392 295. Fax: 01296 381 103.

Cymru

Tel: 01792 324 477. Textphone: 01792 324 455. Fax: 01792 324 422.

London and the South East

Tel: 020 7296 8064 or 0207 296 8066. Textphone: 020 7296 8065.

Fax: 020 7296 8083.

Merseyside

Tel: 0151 236 4497. Textphone: 0151 236 3830. Fax: 0151 236 3150.

North East

Tel: 0161 242 2263. Textphone: 0161 242 2371 or 01642 312 355.

Fax: 0161 242 2317.

North West

Tel: 0161 242 2368. Textphone: 0161 242 2371. Fax: 0161 242 2317.

Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9033 1320. Textphone: 028 9033 1320. Fax: 028 9032 7616.

Scotland

Tel: 0141 550 5760. Textphone: 0151 702 5734. Fax: 0151 702 0608.

South West

Tel: 01225 485 770. Textphone: 0800 622 401. Fax: 01225 874 246.

South Yorkshire

Tel: 01709 372 163. Textphone: 01709 372 182. Fax: 01709 373 643.

West Midlands

Tel: 01902 423717. Textphone: 01902 423716. Fax: 01902 714456.

RNID Video Interpreting

RNID Video Interpreting, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL.

Tel: 0870 765 7446. Textphone: 0870 765 7446.

E-mail: vis@rnid.org.uk Website: www.rnid.org.uk

The CACDP Directory also lists agencies that can book a video interpreter.

Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP)

CACDP produces a directory of BSL/English interpreters, lipspeakers, deafblind interpreters (manual) and speech-to-text reporters, agencies and communication support units. They cannot book communication services for you.

Durham University Science Park, Block 4, Stockton Road,
Durham DH1 3UZ. Tel: 0191 383 1155. Textphone: 0191 383 7915.
Fax: 0191 383 7914.
E-mail: durham@cacdp.org.uk
Website: www.cacdp.org.uk

Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)

If you need a sign language interpreter in Scotland you can contact SASLI who can book one for you.

SASLI, Donaldson's College, West Coates, Edinburgh EH12 5JJ.
Tel: 0131 347 5601. Textphone 0131 347 5601. Fax: 0131 347 5628.
E-mail: mail@sasli.org.uk Website: www.sasli.org.uk

Wales Council for the Deaf

Contact the Wales Council for the Deaf if you want to book an interpreter.

Wales Council for the Deaf, Glenview House, Courthouse Street,
Pontypridd CF37 1JY.
Tel: 01443 485687. Textphone: 01443 485686. Fax: 01443 408555.
E-mail: wcdeaf@freenet.co.uk Website: www.wcdeaf.org.uk

Further information from RNID

If you want to find out more about some of the subjects covered in this factsheet you may find our other factsheets in the communication range useful. You may also want to look at our leaflet, *Communication services for deaf and hard of hearing people*.

The RNID Information Line offers a wide range of information on many aspects of deafness and hearing loss. You can contact us for further copies of this factsheet and the full range of our information factsheets and leaflets.

RNID Information Line

RNID Information Line, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL.

Tel: 0808 808 0123. Textphone: 0808 808 9000. Fax: 020 7296 8199.

E-mail: informationline@rnid.org.uk Website: www.rnid.org.uk

Alternatively, fill in the *Want to know more?* order form at the end of this factsheet and return it to RNID.

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This factsheet is available in **audio tape**, **braille** and **large print**. We can also send you more information on many of the subjects covered in this factsheet. Just tick the boxes below, tell us what you particularly need to know about, or see our website at **www.rnid.org.uk**

Please send me:

Working with a BSL/English interpreter audio tape braille large print

The RNID *Publications Catalogue*.

Information about RNID Typetalk and BT TextDirect.

Details of RNID communication services in my area.

RNID's fundraising leaflet. RNID relies heavily on donations from individuals, companies, trusts and fundraising events. Our leaflet shows how *you* can help.

Details on supporting RNID's future work with a legacy.

Information on how to take part in RNID campaigns.

A copy of the RNID Sound Advantage *Solutions* catalogue, giving details of equipment for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Other information – please tell us what you would like to know.

We are always keen to know what our customers think about our publications. If you have any suggestions for ways we could improve this factsheet you can use the space below. Please send your suggestions to the address overleaf.

Please send this information to: (Please write clearly using block capitals)

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss) First Name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ **E-mail** _____

Telephone _____ **Textphone** _____

Your contact details will be held on our database so that occasionally we can send you information on our work. Please tick this box if you do not wish your details to be kept on the database.

We will use any information you give below to monitor requests for this factsheet and help us tailor our services to your needs. You do not have to give this information, but if you do, please tick this box to confirm we may keep it on our database.

Tick all boxes that apply

Is the information:

- For you
- For a friend or family member
- A professional enquiry

Are you?

- At school or below school age
- A student
- Working age
- Retired

How would you describe yourself?

- Profoundly/severely deaf
- Hard of hearing
- Hearing
- Hearing aid user
- I have tinnitus
- I have balance problems

If we could provide it, would you like to receive information in a different format? Please use number 1, 2 or 3 to show your preferred choice.

- Videotape in British Sign Language (BSL) and with subtitles
- E-mail
- Face-to-face

If we could provide it, would you like information in another language?

- Yes. Please tell us which one.

Please return this form to: RNID Information Line, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL or order from our website at www.rnid.org.uk