

# How to effectively work with British Sign Language Interpreters

A guide that gets rid of uncertainties when it  
comes to dealing with interpreters



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# Be the ultimate facilitator

You have taken the important step of booking an interpreter so that a deaf person, who communicates using British Sign Language, can access your business or service.

- There are now a number of points that you need to consider when working with an interpreter so that communication with the deaf person is facilitated effectively.
- When possible, send preparation materials to the interpreter prior to the booking, for example minutes and agendas or copies of any slides used in presentations. If this is not possible ensure that you at least clearly explain the purpose of the booking and give any background information that you may have.
- Speak to the interpreter before the session starts, regarding the best position for them, as they will be able to advise you. They need to be facing the deaf person and near any visual materials such as flipcharts or television screens. Lighting will also be a factor.



- If only 1 interpreter is present, short breaks will be required every half an hour or so depending on the content. Speak to the interpreter about breaks prior to the session starting.
- Always look at and speak directly to the deaf person and not the interpreter.
- Talk at a normal speed. You don't need to talk slowly and leave long pauses but make sure that you don't speak too quickly.
- In meetings ensure that only one person is speaking or signing at a time.
- Leave enough time for the deaf person to read any written materials without speaking as they are not able to read and watch the interpreter at the same time.
- Remember when asking questions that there will be a slight delay whilst the interpreter interprets
- Ensure that you explain the meaning of acronyms, abbreviations and where possible jargon, so that the interpreter is able to correctly interpret these.
- Ensure that the session finishes on time as the interpreter may have other commitments afterwards.



# Extra information and support

Look here for further information regarding working with British Sign Language Interpreters.

CACDP factsheet: Working with a BSL/English Interpreter

[http://cacdp.org.uk/interpreters/online\\_directory/working\\_with\\_a\\_bsl\\_english\\_interpreter.pdf](http://cacdp.org.uk/interpreters/online_directory/working_with_a_bsl_english_interpreter.pdf)

Action on Hearing Loss:

<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/supporting-you/communication-support/types-of-communication-support-and-interpreters/how-do-i-book-the-right-type-of-communication-support>.

