

Sensory and Autism Services – SC

Good practice when using a sign language interpreter with Deaf and Deafblind people

There are some general things to consider and remember when using an interpreter:

- An interpreter is neutral and will not take 'sides', this means they will not give advice or opinions other than when it affects the efficient conveying of information
- The interpreter will interpret everything that is said, including audible asides and conversations with the interpreter
- It is important that the interpreter has full details of the content of the assignment prior to the day. It is also important to remember that interpreting requires concentration and skill – regular breaks should be negotiated with the interpreter and the user, in general this should be 5 minutes every 25 minutes
- It may be necessary to change the seating arrangements in a room so that the deaf person can take advantage of lighting and other factors
- Speak directly to the person concerned and not to the interpreter. It is important to speak clearly and audibly, try not to cover your mouth whilst speaking
- There will usually be a slight time delay during the interpreting process. It is important to remember this and to allow people 'listening time' to receive the message

MEETINGS:

- Interpreters should not be positioned in front of a window or busy/patterned background
- It is impossible to interpret when more than one person is speaking at the same time
- Visual signals, such as a raised hand should be used to indicate when people in the meeting wish to contribute – this allows for everyone to have the chance to contribute

For all communication support, please remember that it is a difficult and challenging job that requires highly skilled professionals to concentrate for long periods. Both the interpreter and the user can get tired. For this reason sessions over 2 hours will usually require more than one sign language interpreter.