

Irish Deaf Society 2016 General Election Manifesto

There is clear and unambiguous evidence that Deaf Irish Sign Language users do not enjoy substantive equality with hearing people within Irish society. Deaf ISL users are more likely to be unemployed, to experience frustration in accessing vital services, to be denied full access to healthcare services and to drop out of college and training courses.



Proposals for the incoming Government

IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE ACT

The incoming government should support the Irish Sign Language Bill. If passed, the Irish Sign Language Act shall recognise Irish Sign Language (ISL) as the first and preferred language of the Irish Deaf community, and the foremost linguistic and cultural resource belonging to that community. The Act would grant ISL users linguistic rights to access services in their first language.

RATIFY UN CONVENTION ON RIGHTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The incoming government should ratify and implement the UN Convention with immediate effect. This is of considerable importance given the five clauses within the Convention, which refer to sign languages, Irish Sign Language being the indigenous sign language in Ireland.

TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF FIVE MOST URGENT PRIORITIES

On 24 November 2013, Minister of State for Justice, Law Reform and Equality, Kathleen Lynch TD, asked representatives of the Deaf community to identify the five most pressing policy issues of concern to Deaf ISL users. We believe that attention to these key policy issues would benefit the Deaf community enormously, and actions within each area could be implemented immediately. However, to date, no government actions within these five priority areas have been implemented. The priority areas are:

1. Congregated Settings for residential homes – the changes in the policy militate against Deaf residents who want to stay together for linguistic and cultural reasons
2. Procurement of Government Services
 - a. Irish Sign Language Awareness - awareness training for public bodies to be provided
 - b. Website Translation - information on websites of public bodies in relation to essential services to be translated into ISL
 - c. Relay Services - rapid overhaul and redevelopment of telephone relay service and rollout of services nationwide
3. Interpreting Hours Voucher Allocation System
 - a. Including Access to Work - costs of interpreting should be met by the Exchequer, in order to reduce the costs to businesses of employing Deaf people and improving Deaf employee retention
4. Quality Monitoring and Accreditation of Sign Language Interpreters
5. Irish Sign Language Access for deaf children in School