



Who Uses BSL Interpreting?

Approximately 9 million people in the UK have hearing loss, and about 50,000 of those use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred language. It's estimated that around 125,000 people in total are able to converse in BSL in the UK.

BSL Accessibility

Often Deaf people find it difficult to access services as providers are not aware of how best to communicate with them, or do not understand that aids to communication should be arranged and how this can be done.

There are also some assumptions and misconceptions about Deaf people. For example, writing things down is not always effective, as English is often not a Deaf person's first language and this can cause problems.

Lip-reading is not always effective, nor is it a skill that many people have. Even if possible, many words have similar lip patterns and misunderstandings often occur.

Lack of accessibility to appropriate BSL Interpreting may also create unnecessary stress, especially with regard to formal situations.

About BSL

British Sign Language (BSL) is a visual-gestural language, with its own grammar, distinct from English. The language involves the movement of hands, face, body & head to communicate.

People who use BSL as their first language may simply identify themselves as British Sign Language (BSL) users or speakers. They identify themselves as part of a linguistic and cultural minority, and take great pride in being part of a community, with a rich heritage and identity.

BSL was recognised as a language by the Department of Works and Pensions in 2003.

BSL Interpreting Overview

Do I Need to Provide BSL interpreting?

The most relevant piece of legislation to the provision of BSL interpreters for most instances is Equality Act 2010. It's important to note that from a legal perspective, deafness and hearing loss are counted as disabilities, which influences the requirements to provide BSL interpreting.

While it's obvious that the needs of any disability need to be accommodated, this act clearly specifically states that people are entitled to treatment that will not disadvantage or discriminate on account of any hearing impairment.

Reasonable adjustments are therefore required, such as having a BSL interpreter for work meetings, solicitors providing a BSL interpreter, or a theatre providing a BSL interpreter for a play.

If there's any doubt about the requirements, or if you have any questions, our team have plenty of experience and are happy to advise depending on your circumstances.

What's Your BSL provider's Availability?

At Prestige Network we are always keen to make our BSL Interpreting services as accessible as possible for all users.

We frequently handle last-minute enquiries and rescue situations where another provider has let a client down.

This includes use of technology to provide BSL interpreting where the situation requires this, for example international interpreting assignments.

Technology-Based BSL Interpreting Solutions

Online/Remote BSL interpreting services allow users to access BSL interpreting services on demand via a device with a webcam/camera; microphone and speakers and an internet or telephone signal.

It's important to only use this where necessary - video BSL isn't appropriate in certain situations, where misunderstanding can cause serious outcomes, such as legal or disciplinary meetings.

Any more questions?

If you have any further questions or queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Call us on 01635 866 888 or email sales@prestigenetwork.com to find out more.