Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

A Report on the Irish Sign Language Act 2017

What is this information about?

This is an Easy to Read report.

This information is about a report from the National Disability Authority.

The report is about Irish Sign Language, also known as ISL.

The Irish Sign Language Act is a law that was put together in 2017. It started in December 2020.

The ISL Act says that people have the right to use Irish Sign Language.
They have the right to develop and look after this language.

There are around five thousand deaf people in Ireland that use ISL.
Many other people use ISL to communicate with them.

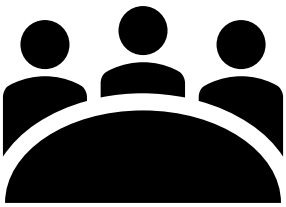
People that use ISL should be able to take part in their communities.

They should be able to understand information and use public services.

The Irish Sign Language Act is not working properly yet.

A lot more work has to be done to meet the needs of the ISL community.

What does the ISL Act say?



Public organisations must make sure that people who communicate with ISL can use their services.

They should have ISL interpreters to support people to use their information and services. They should provide the interpreters for free.

Irish Sign Language interpreters should have the right qualifications and skills.

A person should be able to use ISL in a court.

The court service must make sure that a person is not treated unfairly because they are using ISL.

There should be extra ISL supports for deaf children in school.

There should be ISL classes for family members of a child who is deaf.

There must be ISL training for teachers working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

There should be television programmes with ISL.

There should be money to support people using ISL to take part in social, educational, and cultural activities.

Who checks if the ISL Act is working?

Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

The National Disability Authority is also called the NDA.

The NDA gives the Government advice on things that are important to the lives of persons with disabilities.

An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The NDA was asked by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to write this first report on the ISL Act.

This report says if any changes to the ISL Act are needed.

It says what kind of changes are needed.
The NDA gathered information on how the ISL Act is working now.

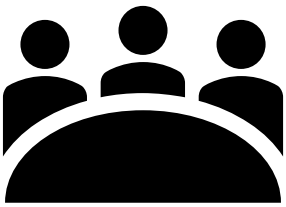
The NDA talked to the public and to people that use ISL.

There were online meetings and surveys.

Individuals and organisations wrote to the NDA with their views and sent signed videos.

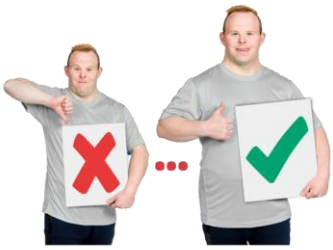
Public Organisations and the ISL Act

Public organisations gave their views in meetings and in a survey.



Just one in three public organisations said they were following all the rules in the ISL Act.

Some public organisations did not know about the ISL Act before they filled in the survey.
Others knew about the Act but did not know what they had to do to follow it.



The public said that there needs to be better use of ISL in healthcare, policing, culture, politics, broadcasting, education, and early childhood care.

More work needs to be done so the public know about and understand the ISL Act.

Staff in public organisations need to understand that ISL is a full language.

Supports, such as interpreters, are very important for good communication and sharing information.
This helps people to use public services.

Rules are needed for public organisations so they can follow the Act.

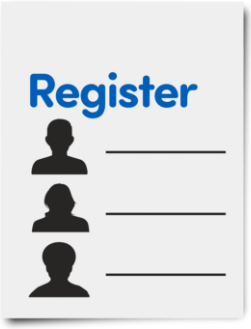
There should be a way for people to complain if the rules are not followed.

Public organisations should write action plans to show how they are putting the Act in place.

Access to Qualified Interpreters

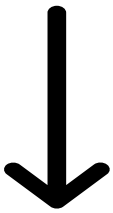
There needs to be enough qualified ISL interpreters.

Public organisations should only employ qualified interpreters.



A list of qualified Irish Sign Language Interpreters was set up in December 2020.

This is called a register.



There is a low number of qualified ISL interpreters.

If more people want to use interpreters, there may not be enough.

This will make it harder to follow the Act.

It is very important that we train more interpreters and keep the interpreters that are working now.

Courts

In the criminal courts, people can usually get ISL interpreters when they need them.

People working in the justice system need to know more about using ISL interpreters.

The civil courts need to make changes so people using ISL know how to get interpreters.

People using ISL need a way to complain if they do not get the right supports in court.

Education

The ISL Act is not fully in place in schools. More work is needed so that children using ISL can reach their best in school.

There should be a review of ISL classes for family members.

This is to check if they are helping families to learn ISL.

There should be a plan for ISL supports for children in schools.

Children using ISL must be able to learn the same things as other children.

There should be more training for teachers working with students that use ISL.

Broadcasting

Changes are needed so we can have better ISL programmes.

Most programmes with ISL are on television during sleeping hours.

This part of the Act may need to be changed. Clearer advice is needed on how to follow this part of the Act.

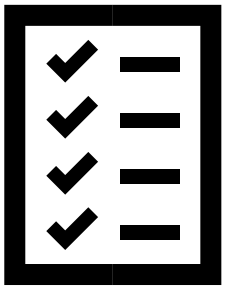
There should be a review of the broadcasting rules to support equality, dignity, and respect in ISL broadcasting.

Support to go to events, Services, and activities

A new test scheme called the Voucher Scheme will start by the end of June 2021.

This scheme will support people to go to events, services, and activities through ISL.

The scheme will be reviewed to see how it works. This will help put together a plan for a full scheme in the future.



Public organisations need to know about the ISL Act and the scheme.

This is to make sure that the Voucher Scheme is used for the right events, services, and activities.

Recognition of Irish Sign Language

The ISL Act says it is important to look after and develop ISL as a language.

It should be clear whose job this is.

Having good quality ISL in television programmes is very important.

Having ISL as a subject in school would help to develop and look after the language.

The high priority changes needed

A number of high priority changes are needed. There are more ideas in the main report. These are the most important actions for the ISL Act to work properly:

- An action plan to get more qualified ISL interpreters.

- More awareness of the Act and what it means in public organisations and the ISL community.

- Changing the Act to make it clear what ISL supports are needed for children in school.

- Finding out how many ISL training places are needed in colleges and universities for teachers working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Making sure teachers have the right qualifications and ISL skills to support children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Changing the Act so that deaf children have a right in law to ISL teaching.

- Saying clearly how the plan for ISL teaching for family members will work.

- Reviewing the way that ISL teaching happens now.

- Checking that there are new and good quality television programmes with ISL.
  These programmes should be on during the day and evening.

- Giving advice to Broadcasters about equality, dignity, and respect as part of the Act.

- Giving clearer information and changing some words used in the Act.

This will help people understand what the Act means.

- Having a system for public organisations to give their services through ISL.

- Finding ways to encourage people and organisations to follow the rules in the Act, for example, action plans.

- Finding ways to check if the Act is working. For example, the Act could be checked as part of checks on the Disability Act or UNCRPD.

This Easy to Read report is from the National Disability Authority.

Ace Communication helped to put together this report.
Experts by Experience helped with this information.