

The Role of a British Sign Language/ English Interpreter

BSL Interpreting is the process of conveying a spoken or signed language into another spoken or signed language to ensure that effective communication takes place between deaf and hearing parties. A qualified BSL/English interpreter is a professional who is fluent in both spoken and signed languages and holds recognised qualifications in both BSL, interpreting practise and theory.

Interpreters can provide simultaneous and consecutive interpretation: i.e., consecutive interpretation where the interpreter translates once the speaker stops speaking, and simultaneous interpreting where the interpreter interprets whilst the speaker is talking. A complete and accurate interpretation also contains intentions, emotions, and the cultural values of the speaker or signer. BSL is an autonomous language and has its own grammatical structure, different to English. Deaf people who use BSL regard English as their second language and some may struggle to read complex written English.

Interpreters do not act as advocates for Deaf people and adhere to a code of practice set forth by their chosen registration body. A BSL/English Interpreter will remain impartial and interpret without bias or preference and would not actively participate in any discussion or conversation or offer their opinions. Any spoken or signed content would remain confidential to the setting and would not be used for the interpreter's own benefit or gain.

Sometimes, to achieve clarity and avoid a language based or cultural misunderstanding, an interpreter may need to seek clarifications to help the achieve accuracy in their interpretation.