A GUIDE FOR HEALTH SERVICE MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Scope of this Guide

This document is a resource for line managers and employees to identify and use best practice in the support of employees of the health service who are deaf or hard of hearing. It offers advice to managers and teams on good practice. It is in line with the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Statement of the HSE, which is committed to creating a positive working environment that values and respects all employees and supports them to reach their full potential (People Strategy 2015-2018, Priority 2.9). Whilst the number of deaf or hard of hearing employees may be small, it is a disability that can be acquired at any stage, and is a condition that, with appropriate supports, can be accommodated effectively in the workplace. It is important that all employees assist colleagues who are deaf or hard of hearing with social integration, and ensure that all team members are included in the range of social activities that take place in a team. There is a robust body of legislation and numerous resources and organisations that support employees with a disability in the workplace. The main legislation and policies are referenced in Section 9.

This guide contains the following:
1. Information about the deaf community and deaf culture
2. Range of services and technology available to support deaf or hard of hearing employees in communication
3. About Irish Sign Language interpreters
4. How to access and book ISL interpreters, and Ethics and Confidentiality
5. The role of the line manager in supporting deaf and hard of hearing employees
6. The role of deaf and hard of hearing staff members
7. The role of Occupational Health
8. Deaf Awareness Training for staff
9. Useful Resources, Contacts, and Legislation links

1. Information about the Deaf Community and Deaf Culture.

"A Deaf community is in part a moral phenomenon. It involves a sense of identity and unity with one's group and a feeling of involvement and wholeness on the part of the individual." Higgins (1980).

The deaf community is a group of people who share the common goals of the deaf community and work towards them. While the majority of members of the deaf community are deaf and hard of hearing, there are some members who are hearing who support the deaf community. The goals of the deaf community can be broadly defined as:

a) **Promoting Deaf Culture***:* Deaf people have their own behaviours, norms and values. They empower themselves to decide for themselves in their own way rather than being imposed on by others.
b) **Promoting use of Irish Sign Language:** ISL is an indigenous language, which is preferred by a majority of members of the deaf community in Ireland. It is a real living language with its own grammatical features, bearing no relation to any spoken languages. Contrary to popular myths, it is neither gesture, nor mimic.

> **2. Range of services and technology available to support deaf or hard of hearing employees in communication**

The communication forms of deaf and hard of hearing people communicating in the workplace vary. People should always be treated as individuals. In addition to Irish Sign Language (ISL), the following are some communication supports:

- *Lip-reading:* Lip-reading is reading the visual cues of the spoken message. It involves observing the movements of the lips and tongue, the lower jaw, eyebrows and the facial expressions of the speaker. The lip-reader will also observe the syllables and stress of the speech.
- *Real-time captions or Computer Assisted Real-time Translation (CART):* CART is produced either on-site or at a remote location and transmitted to the site where the meeting takes place. Hearing people may talk via telephone lines to a captioner in a remote location, who transmits the captioned text via the internet, using special software, to a computer of a deaf user/participant.
- *Instant Messaging (IM):* IM is a type of online chat that offers real-time text transmission over the Internet. Short messages are typically transmitted between two parties. More advanced instant messaging can add file transfer, clickable hyperlinks, Voice over IP, or video chat.
- *Videophone:* A videophone is a telephone which has a camera and screen so that people who are using the phone can see and hear each other.
- *MS Lync / Skype For Business* - Software that is integrated with videophone, voice telephone and instant messaging, which is advantageous for deaf and hard of hearing staff to communicate with colleagues through signed/spoken languages and easily set up on most PC's/laptops with IT Helpdesk support.
- *Irish Text Relay Service (ITRS):* Operated by Eir, ITRS translates text into voice and voice into text to facilitate deaf and hard of hearing people in making and receiving calls in the Republic of Ireland. Calls are relayed through Eir ITRS agents who perform this translation.
- *Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS)* is a collaborative project between, The Irish Deaf Society (IDS) **DeafHear.ie** and **Sign Language Interpreting Service** (SLIS). The Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) provides a live video-link service to an Irish Sign Language interpreter, using a variety of programmes such as Skype, ooVoo or WebEx. The interpreter is based in the SLIS centre and interprets using a computer with internet access and a webcam. This is an additional service and does not replace face-to-face interpreting. Service providers such as Government Departments, Citizen Information Offices, Solas (formerly known as FÁS), County Councils and Schools can avail of this service.
- *ISL Apps/online:* Various apps can be downloaded onto Smart phones such as ISL Everywhere, Concise ISL and Learn ISL.

> **3. About Irish Sign Language Interpreters and Conversational ISL trained staff**

A sign language interpreter provides a vital and confidential service in facilitating effective communication between hearing people, and deaf and hard of hearing people. Sign language interpreters translate from one language to another. In Ireland, this is usually from ISL to spoken or written English and vice versa.

Most ISL interpreters have been formally accredited or have attended an interpreter training programme. To become an accredited ISL interpreter, one must have a high standard of fluency in ISL and undergo stringent training through the Centre for Deaf Studies in Trinity College, Dublin. Accredited interpreters are members of recognised professional bodies and are bound by their Code of Ethics.

It is essential to emphasize that staff who have learned and can use ISL, are not a substitute for qualified ISL interpreters. Hence, ISL interpreters will always be required for those who need and request them. The benefit of staff with knowledge of ISL is in their work with deaf and hard of hearing colleagues and to support their clients and service users who are deaf and hard of hearing through informal communication.

The HSE has an ongoing programme of training to QQI Level 3 ISL. This provides staff members with the basic skills of conversational ISL. To date 4 groups of staff have been trained in Galway Dublin, Cork and Letterkenny. Contact Kevin.stanley@hse.ie for details. Names and service areas area contained in Appendix 1.

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4.   How to access and book ISL interpreters

There are several major agencies, which promote and support ISL interpretation. Contact details are contained in Section 9 but the following are some of the larger service providers:
- Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)
- Bridge Interpreting
- Centre for Sign Language Studies (CSL)
- Trinity College Dublin Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS)
- Council for Irish Sign Language Interpreters (CISLI)
- Irish Deaf Society (IDS)
- DeafHear.ie

Ethics and Confidentiality

At present there are no written regulations or legislation governing the interpreting industry. As a consequence, the quality and range of services vary. HSE management should check if the interpreters have relevant qualifications, ideally through the booking agencies. Interpreters are obliged to keep all information confidential, that they may be privy to in the course of their duties. ISL translation services are subject to a range of protections under the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.

Recognised professionally qualified Irish Sign Language interpreters are bound to CISLI Code of Ethics and Guidelines for professional conduct with its underlying values of Accountability, Professional Competence, Non-discrimination and Integrity.

Checklist for Managing bookings of events where ISL translators will be used
- ✖ **Have you booked in time?**
- ✖ **How many interpreters are needed?**
  The number of interpreters required to carry out an assignment depends very much on the length of the sessions, the degree of difficulty of the subject and the interpreter's knowledge of the subject. As a general guide an interpreter will never work alone on an assignment lasting more than two hours.
- ✖ **Have you asked the deaf or hard of hearing employee what she/he needs?**
  Booking should be made in consultation with deaf and hard of hearing participants, to be clear about what the employee needs.
- ✖ **What about documents which may be used during a meeting / training event?**
  All papers relevant to the event that are circulated amongst the organisers should also be circulated to the interpreters at the earliest possible time.
- ✖ **What about breaks for the interpreters?**
  When planning the structure of the event or the programme, allow for sufficient breaks for the interpreters. Bear in mind that dialogue over coffee breaks is often quite important and deaf and non-deaf participants may wish to communicate with each other at these times.
- ✖ **Consider the layout of the room...**
  If the participants are positioned in circle or semi-circle, interpreters should be close to facilitators/trainers or main speakers, which would be visible to deaf and hard of hearing participants. Correct lighting is essential.
- ✖ **The "one speaker at a time" rule!**
  It is important to maintain one speaker at a time because interpreters cannot interpret when more than one person is speaking
- ✖ The platform or stage set up should include a plain backdrop for the interpreter to enable clear uninterrupted vision of the signed interpretation.

| 5. The Role of the Line manager in supporting deaf and hard of hearing employees |

Useful Link: **National Guidelines on Accessible Health and Social Care Services**
http://hse.ie/eng/services/yourhealthservice/access/NatGuideAccessibleServices/section1.html

Career development and promotional opportunities can be enhanced by offering a broad range of experience in the workplace. Care should be taken to ensure that employees with a disability are made aware of, encouraged and facilitated to maximise their experience in the range of activities within their employment.

Line managers are responsible for communicating performance expectations to their employees and monitoring and appraising their work. Performance issues should be discussed with the employees and appropriate assistance provided to address shortcomings. It is important for Managers to facilitate reasonable support for deaf and hard of hearing employees. Indeed not to do so could constitute breach of the existing legislation with potential for discrimination.

Each individual deaf or hard of hearing staff member must be given consideration regarding their equitable inclusion in the workplace. Line Managers should put in place a cost effective plan for each individual to reasonably accommodate their needs. Simple measure such as:

- Eliminating background noise like air conditioning
- Planning team meetings well in advance to allow bookings for ISL interpreting services to be made
- Positioning of desks to allow the staff member to see and be seen
- Awareness of where presenters stand during presentations
- Lighting and visual aids to support communication
- Plan for emergency situations where aural alarms may sound and have a contingency in place for deaf and hard of hearing employees, such as flashing lights
- Establish a system of on-site peer support
- Encourage other staff members on site to avail of ISL training

| 6. The role of deaf and hard of hearing staff members |

Useful Link: **National Guidelines on Accessible Health and Social Care Services**
http://hse.ie/eng/services/yourhealthservice/access/NatGuideAccessibleServices/section1.html

Disability disclosure is frequently cited as one of the most challenging aspects of having a disability, especially in relation to employment. It is complex and influenced by a number of factors such as self-identity, personality, type of disability, context and previous experience.

Disclosure of disability is not mandatory but will assist both the management and employees with disabilities when knowledge and understanding of the circumstances and nature can lead to positive action and reasonable accommodation. For deaf and hard of hearing staff, disclosure allows management and colleagues to put supports in place if needed and to be fully inclusive with each individual.

Opting not to disclose deafness or hearing loss could put deaf and hard of hearing employees at a disadvantage in the workplace leading to a lack of equitable access in the workplace, for example, provision of ISL interpreter service at meetings / training events.

7. The role of Occupational Health

In the event that an employee acquires hearing loss or deafness, or new employees join the organisation who are deaf or hard of hearing, Occupational Health Departments play a key role in supporting both managers, teams and the individual concerned. In brief, the Occupational Health departments will:

- Carry out an assessment of needs, following on from line manager or self-referral, engaging with external agencies such as DeafHear as appropriate
- Give due consideration to proposals from the employee
- Engage with the employee during each step of the process
- Document what was agreed and communicate with the line manager regarding specific recommendations such as ISL Interpretation services. It should be noted that the budgetary responsibility for the provision of such services lies with the direct line manager
- Conduct regular reviews

8. Deaf Awareness training for staff

The Irish Deaf Society provides Deaf Awareness Training, which aims to bridge the gap of knowledge and awareness of Deaf people that exists in mainstream society. This is particularly useful for staff in understanding the use of Irish Sign Language and facilitation of ISL interpreters in the workplace for deaf and hard of hearing staff. The training consists of: Deaf Awareness and Customer care; Communication skills and ISL; The Deaf Community & Culture; Deaf Access to Information & Inclusive Practices;

Deaf Awareness Training would benefit a service through: Increased confidence through exceptional customer service with signing and other communication skills; Developing positive workforce relationships; and, Reduced unintentional discrimination.

Training should also incorporate information about lipreading, cochlear implant technology and assistive technology and how to use it.

9. Useful Resources, Contacts, Legislation and Policy

Resources
- Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (2013): *A Guide to Disclosure*
- Bridge Interpreting (2012): *Guide for Conference Organisers on Providing Access Through Sign Language Interpretation*
- DeafHear.ie: *Range of resources, information and services*
- Department of Justice and Equality: *National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan 2013 – 2015*
- Higgins, Paul C. (1980) *Outsiders in a hearing world: A Sociology of deafness*
- HSE-Employers Agency (2006): Guidelines on the Equal Opportunities Aspects of Employing People with Disabilities in the Health Service
- HSE Employee Handbook 2016-17
- HSE (2016): *National Guidelines on Accessible Health and Social Care Services*
- HSE (2009): *On Speaking Terms: Good Practice Guidelines for HSE Staff in the Provision of Interpreting Services*
- Irish Deaf Society (2005): Communicating with Deaf People – a guideline on how to communicate

Contacts
Irish Deaf Society: Deaf Village Ireland, Ratoath Road, Cabra, Dublin 7, Tel:(01)8601878 Email: info@irishdeafsociety.ie
www.irishdeafsociety.ie

DeafHear.ie: 35 North Frederick Street, Dublin 1, Tel: (01) 8175700, Email: info@deafhear.ie, www.deafhear.ie

Sign Language Interpreting Service   **:** Deaf Village Ireland, Ratoath Road, Cabra, Dublin 7. Tel: 0761 078440, Email: bookings@slis.ie Website: www.slis.ie

Bridge Interpreting Service: Tel: (087) 9046594, Email: bookings@bridgeinterpreting.ie   Website: www.signlanguageinterpreting.ie

Centre for Sign Language Studies: Unit 18, Tuam Road Retail Centre, Tuam Road, Galway, Telephone: (091) 762470, Email: info@cslstudies.com Website: www.cslstudies.com

Legislation and Policy Framework

There is a robust legal framework protecting the rights of employees with a disability which includes:

- **Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015:**
  (http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/equality_in_work/equality_in_the_workplace.html)
- **Disability Act 2005:**
  http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/DisabilityAct05Guide.pdf/Files/DisabilityAct05Guide.pdf
- **National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021**:
  (http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/WP17000244)
- **Guidelines on the Equal Opportunities Aspects of Employing People with Disabilities in the Health Service:**
  (http://hse.ie/eng/staff/Resources/Employment_Legislation_Guidelines/Guidelines%20on%20Employment%20of%20People%20with%20Disabilities.pdf
- **National Guidelines on Accessible Health and Social Care Services**
  (http://hse.ie/eng/services/yourhealthservice/access/NatGuideAccessibleServices/section1.html
- **National Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2017-2021**

Approval Date: 20th October 2017
Review date: October 2020

HSE Irish Sign Language
QQI Level 3
(Quality Qualification Ireland)
Programme 2017

Congratulations to HSE Staff on attaining Qualification Quality Ireland Level Three in Irish Sign Language

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

Cork

Christopher Carroll: Project Officer
Gene Collins: Area Medical Officer
Rosalind Condon: Administration Staff
Mariae Duggan: Clinical Coder
Evelyn Egar: Dental Staff
Mary Finn: Dentist
Martina O'Sullivan: Public Health Nurse
Karen Walne: Community Mental Health Team

Dublin

Yvonne Byrne: Social Care Team
Sharon Crichlow: Community Mental Health Team
Billy Forbes: Social Worker
Michele Guerin: Equality Officer
Michael Ho: Administration Staff
Deirdre McNally: Social Worker
Seosamh O Maolalai: Employee Support Staff
Aoife O'Reilly: Administration Staff
Tara Sullivan: Senior Registrar
Lucy Walsh: Social Worker

Galway

Stephanie Cassol: Speech & Language Therapist
Caitriona Conroy: Social Worker
Mona Eames: Management Staff
Denise Fahy: Administration Staff
Michelle Finn: Nurse
Barry Hannagen: Paramedic
Mary Hynes: Management Staff
Frances Mannion: Administration Staff
Gary McDonald: Community Mental Health Team
Geraldine McEleney: Social Worker
Linda Rabbitte: Medical Scientist
Anne Silke: Employee Support Staff

Letterkenny

Patricia Boyce-Dunleavy: Administration Staff
Mary Bruton: Nurse
Ann Gallagher: Administration Staff
Mary Garvin: Management Staff
Roseann Grady: Dental Nurse
Mary Mulvaney: Catering
Fiona McGeady: Dental Hygienist
Gemma McLoone: Employee Support Staff

While the QQI level 3 certificate will help staff to communicate better with deaf and hard of hearing colleagues, clients and service users, it should be noted that it is not intended to substitute for qualified ISL interpreter qualification gained via a TCD degree programme under the Centre for Deaf Studies.

Inclusion through Sign Language