THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Student Disability Service

Working with British Sign Language (BSL) users and BSL/English interpreters remotely for online meetings

Before the meeting:

- Preparation is key – ensures the deaf person(s) gets the best service from the interpreter. Key materials to be shared with the BSL/English interpreter(s) beforehand:
    - Agenda
    - Paperwork / minutes of previous meeting, if any
    - Participant names and brief on their role
- Where possible, allow deaf person to choose the online platform that works best for them
    - More stable connection between deaf person(s) and interpreter
    - 15 minutes prior to the meeting, the deaf person(s) and the interpreter(s), along with chair, should meet online to ensure everything is working as expected – ensure that this is clearly communicated with all involved
- Share information about how to use specified platform – circulate beforehand so can be prepared and test the platform is working well
- Ensure that 'multi-pin' option is prioritised for BSL users (i.e. the deaf person(s) and BSL/English interpreter) – this should be done as soon as participants have joined the meeting
- Check the equipment being used, is it of high quality in terms of video and sound
- Do meeting participants have previous experience / received training in:
    - BSL / Deaf awareness
    - How to work with interpreters

During the meeting:

- Be clear who the agreed Chair of the meeting is
- All meeting participant videos should be switched off and microphones muted
    - The interpreter(s) and deaf person(s) keep their videos on, this will allow two-way communication to ensure picture quality is clear
    - Whoever is speaking, switch on the microphone and video (if they wish)
- The chair needs to be well organised and control the meeting well
    - Participants should use 'Hands-up' function where applicable if wish to contribute to the meeting
    - When it is your turn – state your name before speaking especially if it is an audio meeting so that interpreter can relay to deaf person(s) who is talking
- Turn on captions if this is possible

- The interpreter may be using a different platform to work with the deaf person(s) and not within the meeting itself so don't forget the interpreter is present
    - (for example, the deaf person(s) is in the meeting on MS Teams but may be communicating with the interpreter via FaceTime)
- If the chair hears the interpreter's voice this would indicate that either the deaf person(s) wants to contribute or the interpreter is looking for clarification
- Don't refer to the interpreter, always refer to the deaf person(s) by their name
    - Be mindful that the deaf person(s)'s microphone may be off so their video may not show up – pin / spotlight their video so that you can see them speaking
    - Be aware that there may be a delay in relaying information
- Mindful about breaks needed – does meeting need to be very long?
    - Would recommend that meeting is maximum 30 minutes if interpreter is working alone; if two interpreters present then there may be a change of voice throughout the meeting
- Try to avoid using abbreviations during the meeting
    - If possible, share a list of abbreviations within the preparation
- Do use the 'chat' function for any additional comments, although be mindful that the deaf person(s) may not view the messages until after the meeting so if there is an urgent response required to a message please highlight this in the meeting
    - If possible and where appropriate, enable private direct messages to be exchanged between BSL user(s) (e.g. BSL/English interpreters to communicate privately in relation to co-working)
- If using break-out rooms, make sure that the interpreter(s) is in the same room as the BSL user
- Double check that the multi-pin function is reinstated for whoever needs it (this may disappear if going between main session and break out rooms)

After the meeting:

- Useful to gather feedback from all participants – this includes the BSL/English interpreter(s) as this will support planning for future meeting(s)
- The chair / host of the meeting to have a debrief with the deaf person(s) to ensure everything was captured during the meetings and any questions can be asked
- Share notes as soon as possible after the meeting

Online platforms:

- Collaborate
- Microsoft Teams
- Skype
- Vscene
- Zoom

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DATE March 2022

If you require this in an alternative format please contact disability.service@ed.ac.uk