



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Student Disability Service

Organising online accessible events for British Sign Language (BSL) users

Before the event:

Thinking about the audience that this event is targeted at, you should consider the following factors when organising an online event:

WHO is the intended audience that your event is targeted at?

- Students
- Prospective students
- General public

WHY has this event been organised? (Including but not limited to)

- Induction week
- Social event
- Careers event
- Lecture series

WHAT support requirements should be organised?

- Communication support
 - o British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreters
 - o Note takers / live captioning function
- Do not assume all BSL users need the same support – essential to have sufficient communication beforehand with individual
 - o Opportunity for individual to get in touch e.g. through contact SCOTLAND-BSL or uploading a BSL video
- Preparation is important
 - o As much information as possible
 - o Agenda of event, Programme of event, content, presentations
 - o Share with BSL user and BSL/English interpreters at the earliest possible opportunity

WHEN

- Booking communication requires to be done well in advance; as soon as a date(s) is agreed for the event
- If the event is more than 30 minutes then at least two interpreters should be booked
- If multiple events, will BSL/English interpreters be available at all or on selected days/times?
 - o If the latter, be clear when BSL/English interpreters will be present

WHERE

- Ensure that the online platform is accessible for all involved
- Be clear with the BSL user(s) and BSL/English interpreters which platform is being used
 - o If it is an internal event ensure that the interpreter has a link to the event and is able to access it
 - o Discuss with BSL user(s) and BSL/English interpreters if alternative platform needs to be used (e.g. Collaborate not deaf friendly as cannot pin interpreter's video so may need to use Zoom between BSL user and interpreter on a separate screen)
 - o The University of Edinburgh supports Zoom as an online platform so this would be the preferred platform to run events / open meetings on. If Collaborate, for example, is the preferred platform then it is possible to run both platforms in parallel
 - Ensure that this has been arranged and details are shared with both the BSL/English interpreters and BSL user(s)
- Opportunity before the event for BSL users, BSL/English interpreters and event organisers to test selected platform and its set-up

HOW

- Approaching communication support
 - o Book freelance BSL/English interpreters directly through regulatory bodies (e.g. SRLPDC and/or NRCPD)
 - o Book using an agency (e.g. JustSign, Deaf Action)
 - o More information about booking BSL/English interpreters is available on this link: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/british-sign-language-plan/resources/procedure-for-booking>
- Rates of one interpreter can be found on the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI) - <http://nubsli.com/guidance/interpreter-fees/> – please note that this is guidance and fees may vary
- Translation of information
 - o Is this a one-off event or recurring event? (content of translation may be dependent on these factors)
 - o Ask a Deaf translator to translate information into BSL Information is accessible prior to the event
 - o Translation of event details available?
 - Organise this to be done ASAP
- Budget available for the event
 - o Does this cover communication support and translation (where applicable)?
- Advertisement
 - o Information
 - o Accessible
 - o Where (i.e. social media platform?)
 - o Who will promote events
- Brief other colleagues about working with BSL users and BSL/English interpreters
- If you are planning on recording the session, ensure permission is sought from all participants including BSL/English interpreters

During the event:

- Acknowledge presence of BSL/English interpreters and establish ground rules (e.g. one speaker at a time, pin BSL/English interpreter if needed)
- Videos and microphones preferably switched off, except for:
 - o Organiser / presenter
 - o BSL/English interpreters
 - o BSL users (optional)
- Lighting should be sufficient and not make presenter too dark
- How many breaks will be provided in the event
 - o Be clear how long these breaks are
 - o If event is half a day or a full day then ideal to have regular breaks (eye breaks)
 - A full day can be tiring for all involved so if you are able to break the event down over consecutive days then look into this as an option
- Sound quality clear for BSL/English interpreters and note takers / live captioners
- Interaction:
 - o If using break out rooms, ensure that BSL users are with BSL/English interpreters
 - o Chat function – sometimes BSL users do not use this so if something needs to be responded to, make the individual aware
 - o If possible, save the text from the chat function to be shared after the event (could be used as a FAQ or debrief of event, benefits all participants)
 - o If BSL user responding, ensure their video is pinned / spotlighted (some platforms follow voice of who is speaking so BSL/English interpreter will be voicing over for the BSL user and their video will instead pop up)

After the event:

- If the event has been recorded, ensure that permission has been granted from all participants. BSL/English interpreters should be visible at all times in the recording, as well as access to captions
- Will materials be shared afterwards, if so – how will this be shared? Will these be accessible?
- Feedback gathering – will different formats be available?
- Worth having a debrief afterwards with the BSL users and BSL/English interpreters to assess how accessibility was during the event and if anything should be altered for next time

Online platforms:

Zoom is favoured by BSL users as video quality is smoother and easier to view individuals; the host needs to ensure that the deaf person(s) and BSL/English interpreters are given the option to multi-pin. The host can also appoint someone to provide live captioning. Additional functions include:

- Break out rooms – good for small group discussions
 - o Make sure the BSL/English interpreter is in the same room as the BSL user(s) where applicable
 - o Be aware that when returning to main session, the multi-pin function may disappear, so make sure that this is reinstated where necessary
- Hands-up function

- Waiting room
- Screen sharing

MS Teams able to pin more than one person which works well if multiple BSL users and BSL/English interpreters present during event. Additional functions include:

- Live auto caption available but not 100% accurate
- Hands-up
- Screen sharing

Collaborate is good for break out rooms but no option to pin anyone so if using this platform then means BSL users and BSL/English interpreters are connected through a different platform e.g. Zoom or WhatsApp.

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