

Signposting.

An introduction to making your digital work more BSL inclusive.

Introduction.

Increasingly we are creating digital work but the vast majority of it is not accessible to deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL).

Why is this important?

- Rights.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, recognised BSL as an indigenous language of Scotland akin to Gaelic. The BSL National Plan set out the obligations to BSL users, enabling them to have full access to the cultural life of Scotland as participants, audience members and professionals.

- Creative reasons.

Open up new and exciting ways of working.

What is BSL?

BSL is a visual language, with its own grammatical structure that is distinct from SSE (Sign Supported English) or spoken English.

Therefore, when working with BSL, treat it like any UNIQUE language, with its own history, culture and grammar.

Contents.

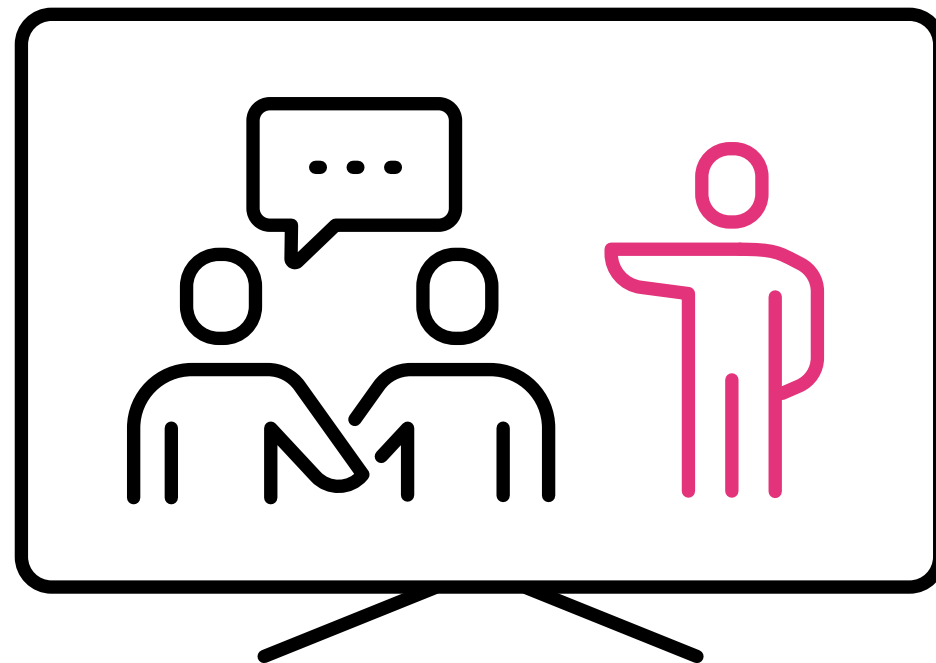
- What are my options?
- Making your English language work more accessible.
- Working with original BSL content.
- General rules for filming.
- Key processes.
- Information about communication or language professionals.
- FAQ.
- Links/Resources.
- Ideas for marketing.

**What are
my options?**



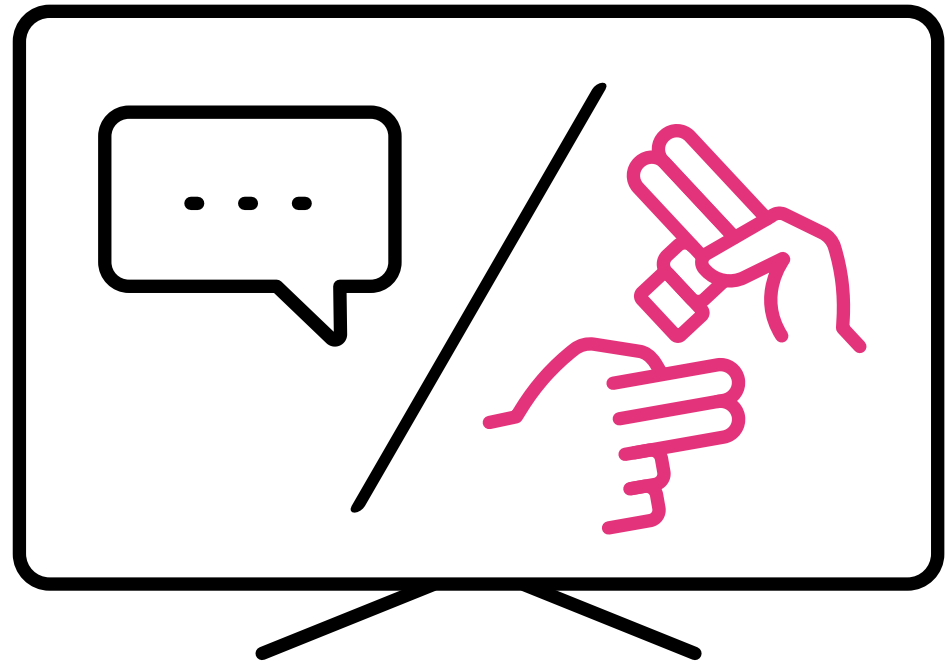
Translated English Content.

Any spoken English is also translated into BSL and delivered on screen by a BSL presenter or actor/performer.



Multilingual Performance.

This is a creative decision to develop a digital project in both BSL and English. For example, you might have a character that uses sign language.



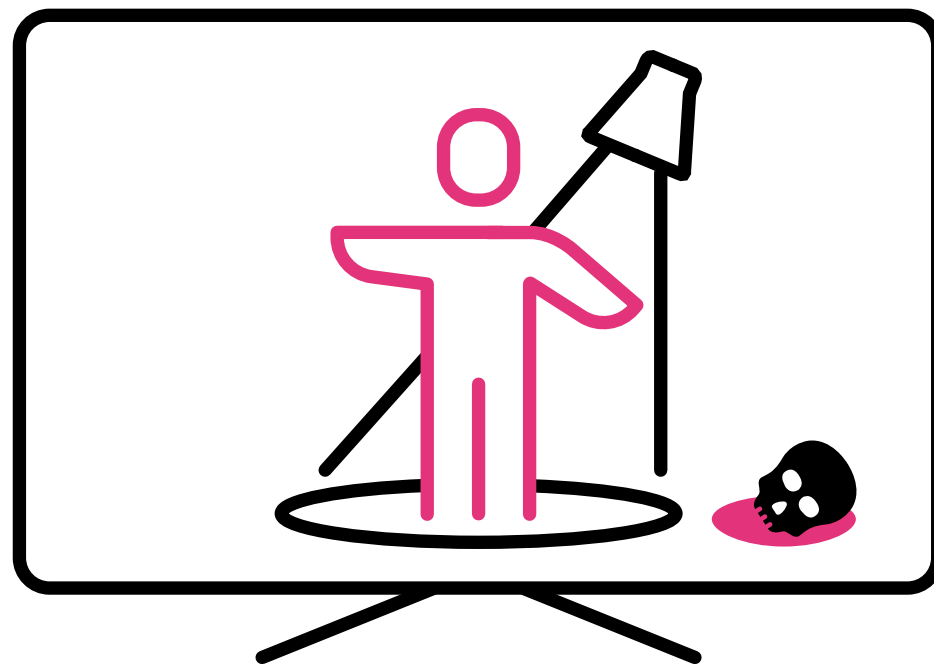
BSL Performance.

A piece of digital work where the principal language used is BSL, this could be original/devised or a translation from an existing written text.

Or, use a mixture of translated, multilingual or BSL performance.

Note:

There are also other art forms that are accessible to deaf audiences with many deaf people working within these fields, for example dance and visual vernacular.



Where to start?

- Include a BSL Consultant in your creative decisions from the start. This might be the person you intend to use in the video.

[Learn More](#) 

- Understand the translation process from English to BSL and vice versa. This is a creative process that needs expertise and time. Who will be responsible for this work? Do you need a BSL dramaturg or translator, for example?

[Learn More](#) 

- Understand any communication support needs from start to end. If a Sign Language Interpreter (SLI) is required, ask the deaf person if they have a preference or recommendation.

[Learn More](#) 

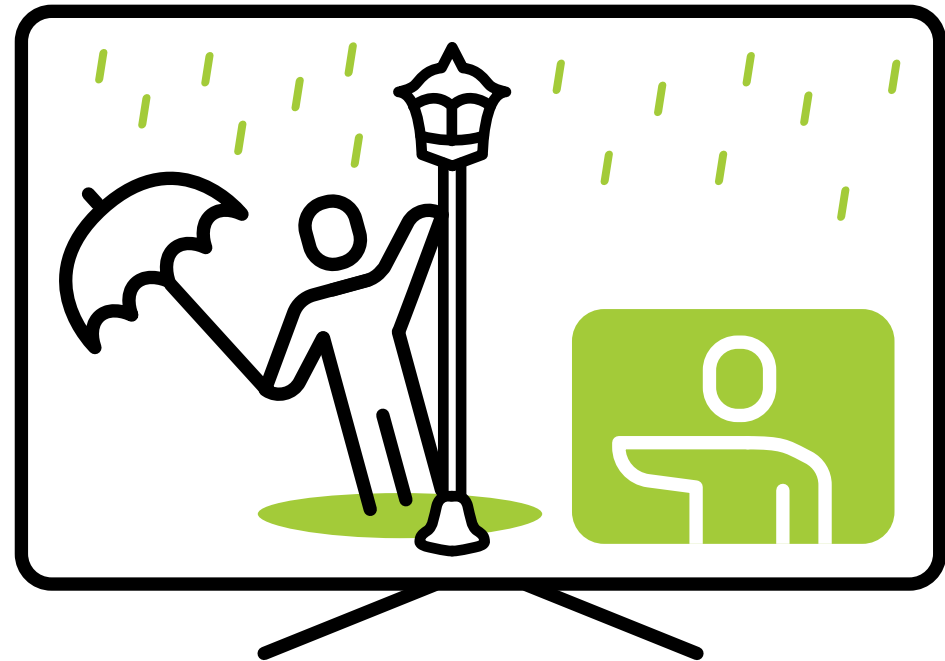
- Budget properly and build your BSL project into your planning from the start.
- Get excited about working with BSL, it is a rich visual language!

**Making your
English language work
more accessible.**



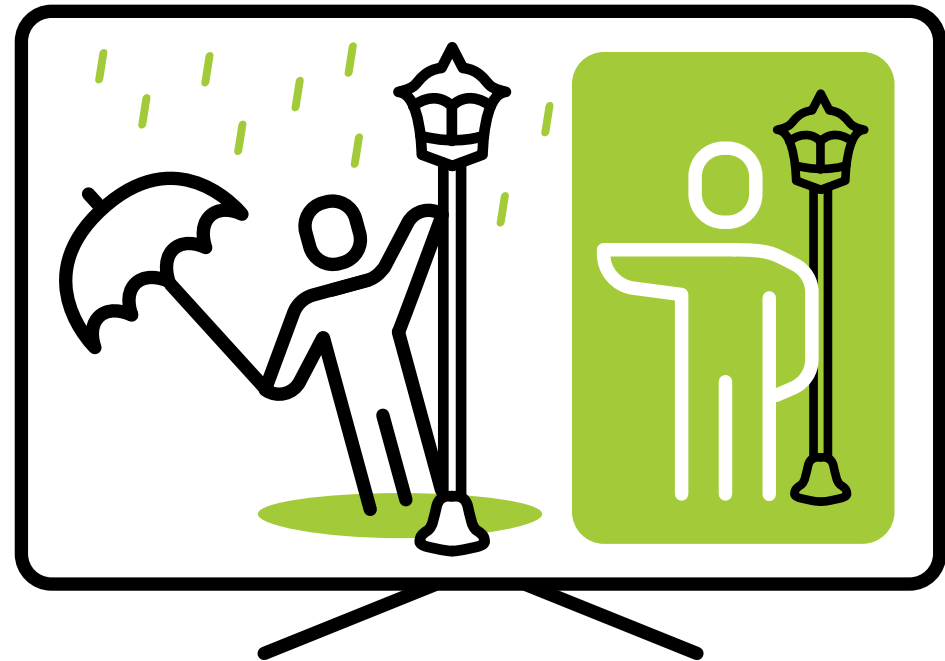
Translated English content.

Traditionally using the bottom right hand square



Get creative.

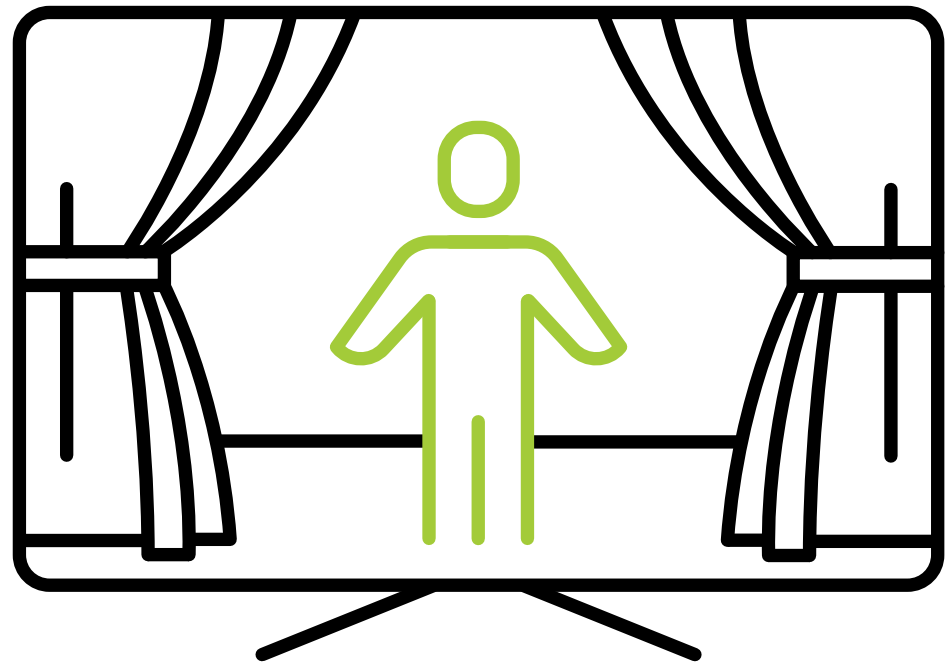
Frame, background, interpreter size.



BSL introduction.

A BSL introduction is a separate signed video often with a presenter providing key information about a project, film or event.

It is commonly used for promotional purposes, or to provide context.



Use a deaf person/presenter to interpret your English language work where possible.

Alternatively, you could choose to use a Sign Language Interpreter, but consult on and consider the creative possibilities of all your options.

A note on frame size.

Depending on what type of video you are producing, think about the placement and size of the interpreter in the frame. The larger the interpreter appears, the more accessible the signing will be - especially if viewed on a small screen.

Example 1

A signed theatre performance

Example 2

A signed children's book

Example 3

A BSL introduction video

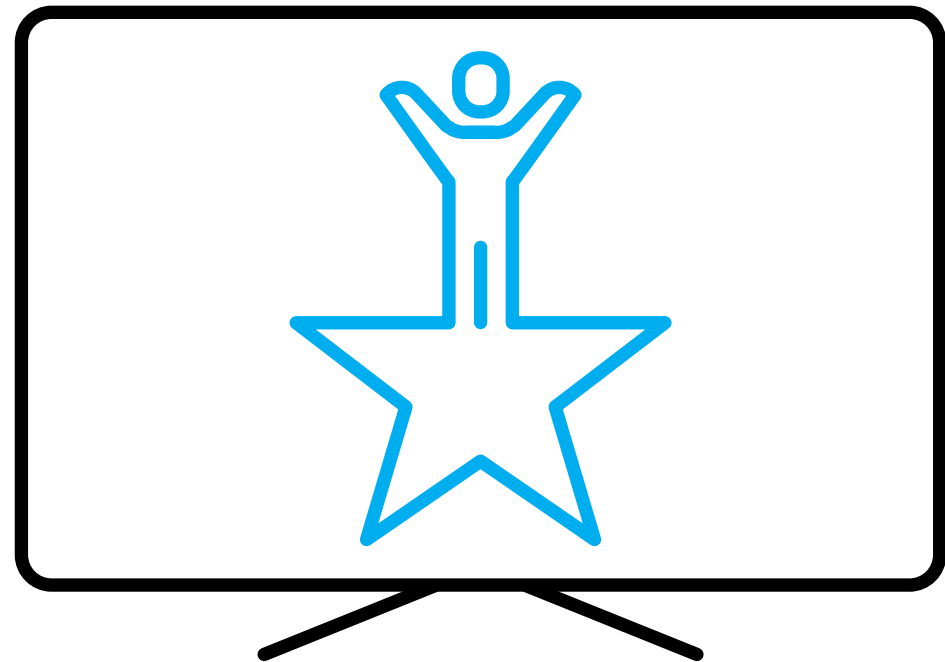


Working with original BSL content.



Original BSL content.

From an existing piece of work or devised.



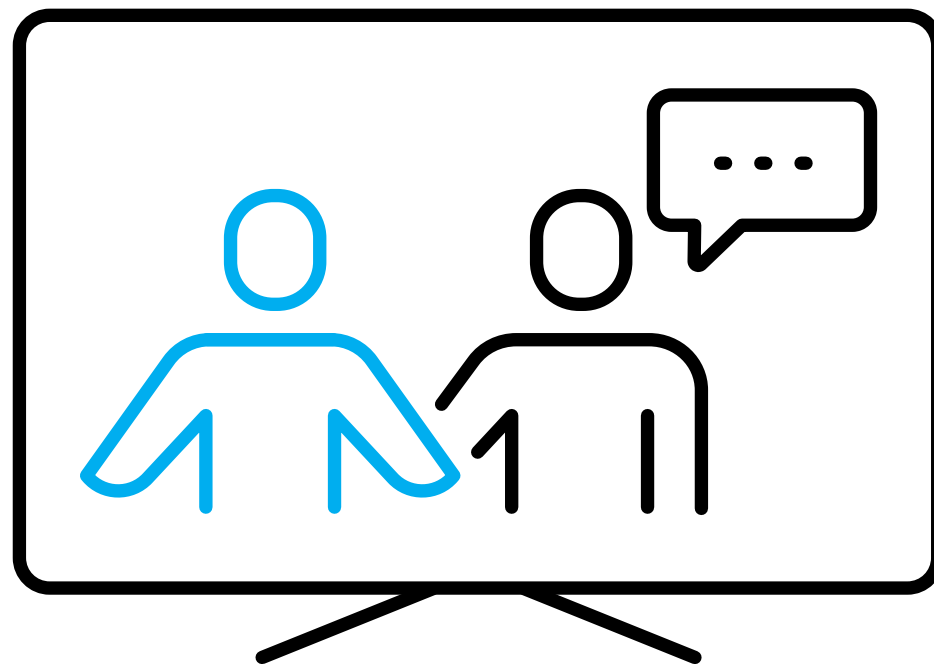
Multilingual performance.

Different creative ways to bring BSL and English together. Aim to use a deaf actor for any performative BSL work where you can. This is best practice and would always be our preference.

Example 1 BSL Zone

Example 2 Solar Flares films

Example 3 See Hear



Things to think about.

- Creatively collaborate early, this might include rehearsals etc.
- Consider using a BSL dramaturg in your process.

[Learn More](#) 

Note:

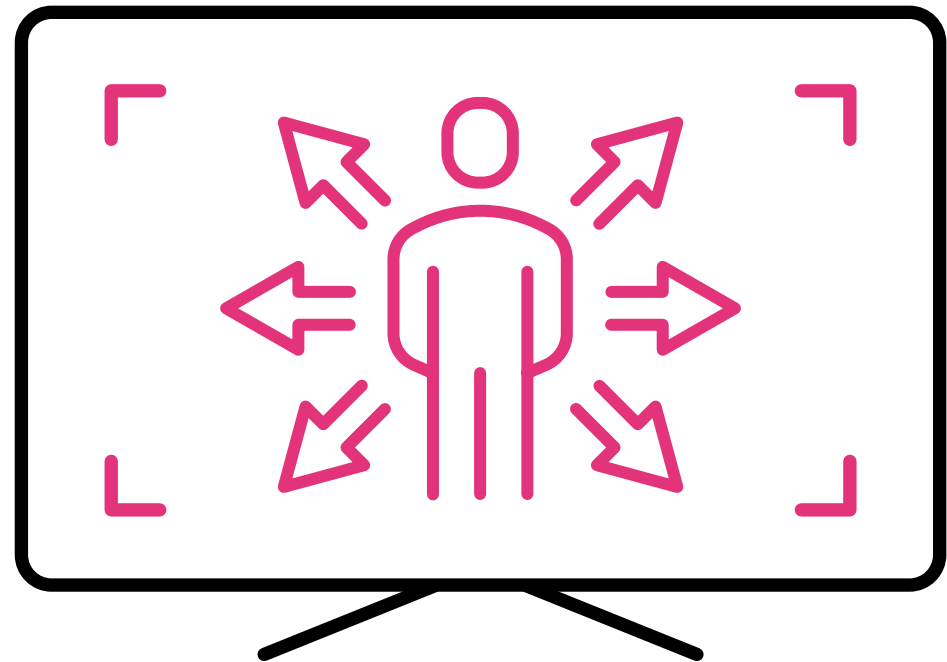
When you are making multilingual digital work, think about what else you might want to do to make all elements of the video accessible, including captions.

General rules for filming.



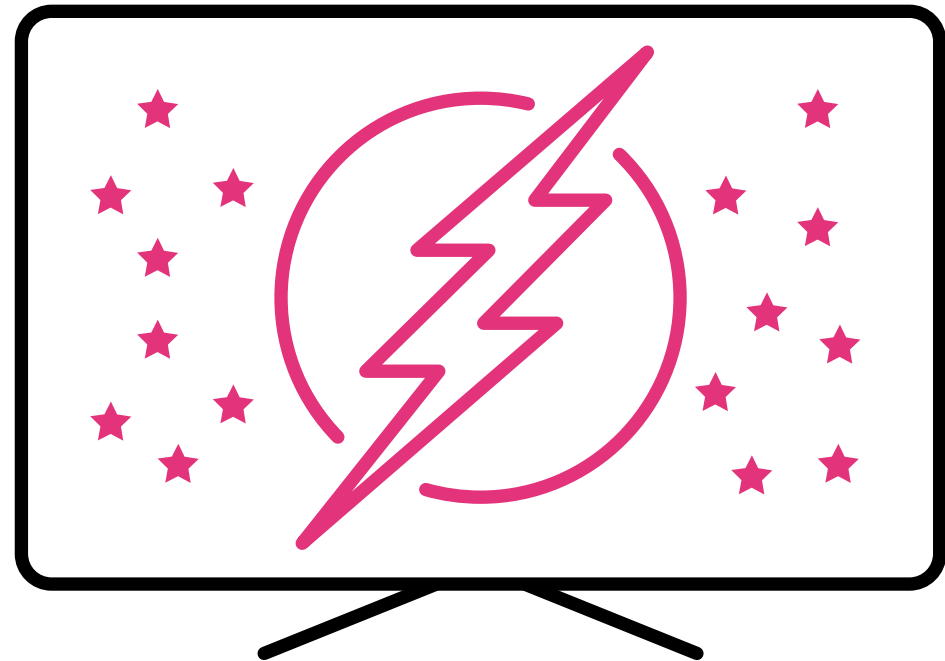
Space.

Make sure you film with plenty of signing space. When using a green screen, is the green screen big enough?



Don't get flashy.

Be aware of distracting elements (visual noise) in the frame, including clothing.



Captions.

Always add captions.



Get creative.

Costume, props, background,
movement – get visual.



Tips.

- Have you thought about working with a deaf filmmaker and/or editor?
- Does your editor have BSL skills? If not, what support might be needed for them?
- It is a good idea to take notes of best takes during filming.
- Always add captions.
- Creating digital BSL content is only worthwhile if you can reach a deaf audience!

See [HERE](#) for some suggestions.

BSL Monitor/ Script Editor.

During the filming process when working with deaf participants consider bringing in a BSL Monitor/Script Editor. This could be an SLI or a deaf translator (or the same person who is your BSL consultant).

This person can support on-the-spot translation, review takes, work with the video production team, operate visual aids, slides or a teleprompter. This can be a vital component in a successful digital project.

Please take advice from participants to see if this is required and budget appropriately.

Key processes.



Each production is unique. Below we have outlined some of the processes or tasks to consider. You might use one or all of these, depending on your project, and the resources you have. It's important to note that you could use the same person to deliver more than one of these tasks!

Digital Project

Development

Production

Post Production

BSL consultant
(part or all)



Communication support
(part or all)



Translation
(part or all)



BSL Dramaturg



BSL Monitor



BSL Consultant

A person with expertise developing digital video projects that include BSL. This person will be able to help you plan for your video content production and advise on all processes. Ideally this person should be deaf.

Communication support

Specifically when communicating between languages, BSL to English and vice versa. If for example you have a long development meeting planned, you should plan for more than one person to cover communication support.

Translation

From BSL into English and vice versa.

Dramaturg

This is a theatre term and refers to a person that creatively develops the BSL elements within a piece of work. This can include translation. This person tends to be more embedded in the production and creative process compared to someone who works remotely on delivering translation.

BSL Monitor

This is a person brought in specifically to support all the BSL/translation needs during filming.

**Information about
communication or
language professionals.**



During this document we have already referred to Sign Language Interpreters, but it is important to recognise that there are a variety of professionals you may choose to use.

Remember Communication and Language professionals are not just an access requirement for deaf people – they are for you to have access too!

Some common terms/acronyms:

SLI

Sign Language Interpreter, a generic term for a person who has completed formal BSL training (Level 6) and passed an accredited BSL-English/English-BSL Interpreting course.

TSLI

Trainee Sign Language Interpreter, this is a person who has completed formal BSL training (Level 6), is studying on an accredited interpreter course and has chosen to register with NRCPD and/or SRLPDC. In doing so, they adhere to the same requirements as RSLIs in terms of insurance, PVG, and codes of conduct.

RSLI

Registered Sign Language Interpreter, this is a person who actively maintains their continued professional development with training, post qualification. As part of their registration, they are required to have professional indemnity insurance and be members of the PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) scheme.

They are monitored, supported and regulated by the registering body and adhere to a professional code of conduct. The two registering bodies in the UK are NRCPD and SCLPDC (also known as the Scottish Register).

www.nrcpd.org.uk

www.thescottishregister.co.uk

CSW

Communication Support Worker, this is a person who may have completed some formal BSL training or may have learned from within the community. You should check with the CSW regarding their background and experience.

BSL Translator

A generic term for anyone who provides translation service from English to BSL and vice versa.

Qualified BSL Translator

A translator with a recognised qualification. It is important when reaching out to Communication or Language Professionals to consider their experience, qualifications and expertise in relation to your project. When possible, please consult with a BSL consultant or deaf participant.

Note:

Some qualifications are dual qualifications but not all; so not all RSLs are qualified translators. Similarly, you may have a deaf translator who is not an interpreter.

Both hearing and deaf people work in the listed professions.

FAQ.



How do I contact deaf actors or presenters?

The BA Performance in BSL and English at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has produced two cohorts of talented deaf actors/theatre makers. Solar Bear is happy to signpost you to these actors and champion their work.

UK-wide, Graeae and Deafinitely Theatre are pioneering companies working with deaf actors. You can also find deaf presenters working under, 'Communication Support' see below. For more information see links at the end of this document.

How do I contact deaf filmmakers/editors?

There are details of deaf filmmakers on the Solar Bear, Solar Flares website see www.solarbear.org.uk/solar-flares

You can also contact filmmakers through popular Facebook pages such as [Alba Cats](#).

How do I contact Communication or Language Professionals?

There are a number of agencies that work within the UK. You can also access a list of registered freelance professionals here:

www.thescottishregister.co.uk

www.nrcpd.org.uk

Remember to consider the full parameters of the work you are wanting them to undertake. Communication or Language Professionals are trained in the same way as your GP (with almost as many years behind them), and only some go on to specialise in specific fields. Don't be afraid to ask questions about their background and expertise.

It may also be appropriate to use Communication or Language Professionals who identify outside of white, heteronormative, cis identities or to specifically seek out deaf professionals.

www.interpretersofcolour.net

www.deafrainbowuk.org.uk

Links/Resources.



Links for English work translated.

Example 1

A signed theatre performance

The Space for Opera North

Example 2

A signed children's book

Royal Association for Deaf People

Example 3

A BSL introduction video

National Theatre of Scotland

Links for BSL performance work.

Example 1

BSL Zone

Example 2

Solar Flares

Solar Bear

Example 3

See Hear

BBC

Theatre companies.

Solar Bear Theatre Company
solarbear.org.uk

Birds of Paradise
boptheatre.co.uk

Deafinitely Theatre Company
deafinitelytheatre.co.uk

Graeae Theatre Company
graeae.org

Ramps on the Moon
rampsonthemoon.co.uk

Deaf and Hearing Ensemble
dhensemble.com

Other organisations.

Deaf Action
deafaction.org

NDCS
ndcs.org.uk

BDA
bda.org.uk

Limping Chicken
limpingchicken.com

BSL Zone
bslzone.co.uk

See Hear
www.bbc.co.uk

Communication support.

List of definitions

bslfirst.com

bslcommunicationservices.co.uk

SASLI

signlanguageinteractions.com

Scottish Register of Language Professionals in the Deaf Community

thescottishregister.co.uk

Links/ Resources.

BSL Scotland Act

bslscotlandact2015.scot

BSL National Plan

www.gov.scot

Other

BA Performance in BSL and English

rcs.ac.uk

What is Visual Vernacular

unusualverse.com

Ideas for marketing.



Sometimes producing work is the easy part, the real challenge can be reaching out and finding an audience.

At the outset you should explore if there is an audience for what you want to produce and also plan to make it as visually compelling as possible.

There are then a few obvious things you can do:

- **Create a BSL information/marketing video with all the key information and links.**
- **Make sure any images/posters designed are visual and make it explicit about what BSL access is included. You should also include who is involved - for example, the name of the interpreter or BSL presenter.**
- **Use your 'BSL team' to help promote your work and advise on good places to advertise.**

Reach out to other organisations including:

- **Solar Bear**
- **Birds of Paradise**
- **Deaf Scotland**
- **British Deaf Association**
- **Deaf Action**
- **Deaf Clubs**
- **Deafinitely Theatre**
- **Graeae**
- **National Deaf Children's Society**

Engage early, make something people want to see and tell them about it.

This document has focused on British Sign Language, however it is important to acknowledge that rather than being a single homogenous group, deaf communities are rich and diverse.

Within these communities, individual communication and language preferences differ widely - including BSL, SSE, lip reading and spoken English.



SOLAR BEAR

Special thanks to Creative Scotland,
our lead researcher Lucy Clark, and all
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