

## Guidelines for Professional Practice for British Sign Language/English Interpreters

Interim from 1 January 2009 until further notice

In this document *interpreter* means any person who is registered as a *Member of the Register of BSL/English Interpreters (MRSLI)*, a *Trainee Interpreter (TI)* or a *Junior Trainee Interpreter (JTI)* according to the current conditions of registration.

### Status and Spirit of the Code

Interpreters are required to abide by the *Code of Ethics* and the following *Guidelines for Professional Practice*, when working with consumers, or managing, training, supervising or mentoring other interpreters. It is a condition of registration that interpreters confirm in writing their willingness to abide by the *Code of Ethics* and the *Guidelines for Professional Practice*.

The aim of the *Guidelines for Professional Practice* and the *Code of Ethics* is to ensure that communications across languages and cultures are carried out consistently, competently and impartially; this sets a framework for interpreting, which will be upheld, if necessary, by the *Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure*.

### Definitions

- *Principal* means any person or organisation that books the services of an interpreter.
- *Consumer* means any person or organisation using the services of an interpreter.
- *Work* and *assignment* mean interpreting work, and also work related to interpreting, e.g. managing, training, supervising, examining and mentoring.
- *Parties* means all those involved in the interpreting assignment.

## **1. Fundamental Principles**

- 1.1 Interpreters respect consumers' rights.
- 1.2 Interpreters do not discriminate against parties, either directly or indirectly, on any grounds.
- 1.3 Interpreters respect confidentiality.
- 1.4 Interpreters demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional development.
- 1.5 Interpreters do not engage in any behaviour that may bring the profession into disrepute.

## **2. Acceptance of Work**

- 2.1 Interpreters should only undertake interpreting assignments for which they have the appropriate qualifications, competence, and experience.
- 2.2 Interpreters should not accept an assignment where their impartiality could be questioned. Interpreters will disclose any information, including conflicts of interest, which may make them unsuitable for an assignment.
- 2.3 Interpreters may refuse any assignment without giving a reason.
- 2.4 If an interpreter is unable to undertake an assignment that s/he has accepted, the principal should be informed as soon as possible. If the interpreter is in a position to do so, s/he should assist in finding an appropriate interpreter to take her/his place. Interpreters should not hand over an assignment to another interpreter without the agreement of the principal.
- 2.5 Interpreters should, if possible, only accept work on agreed terms and conditions.

- 2.6 Fees for interpreting work should be agreed between the interpreter and the principal.
- 2.7 Once interpreters have accepted an assignment, they should not change the agreed terms and conditions without the agreement of the principal, preferably in writing or on video.

### **3. Standards of Work**

- 3.1 Interpreters should endeavour to interpret as accurately as possible; they should not add nor take anything away from the intended meaning and should keep to the spirit of what is said or signed.
- 3.2 Interpreters should strive to ensure that complete and effective communication takes place.
- 3.3 If there are communication problems during an assignment, interpreters should look to solve these using their professional skills.

### **4. Confidentiality**

- 4.1 Interpreters are expected to keep confidential any information pertaining to, or arising from an interpreting or interpreting related assignment. The only exceptions to this requirement are listed in 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4.
- 4.2 An interpreter may require evidence of interpreting for training or assessment purposes. The interpreter should, though, respect the consumer's right to confidentiality and only use such evidence with their expressed permission.
- 4.3 The interpreter may pass on information pertaining to or arising from an interpreted assignment if failure to do so could result in prosecution or if required to do so by law.
- 4.4 Interpreters may pass on information pertaining to or arising from an interpreted assignment to protect the welfare of an individual or the community at large.

- 4.5 Information given and interpreted in public is not confidential.
- 4.6 If required, and with the agreement of all parties, the interpreter may work to the confidentiality policy of the employing institution (e.g. educational establishment or health service).

## **5. Impartiality**

- 5.1 Interpreters should be impartial, and show no bias or preference to any consumer when interpreting.
- 5.2 Interpreters should not benefit unfairly from any information learned while they are working.
- 5.3 Conflicts of interest should be declared as soon as possible, if these have not been disclosed when accepting an assignment.

## **6. Professional Behaviour, Development and Relationships**

- 6.1 Interpreters are expected to support the reputation of the interpreting profession and work to improve their professional standards and status through continuing professional development.
- 6.2 Interpreters will respect the ethics and the working practices of other professions.
- 6.3 Interpreters should endeavour to present and behave in a manner appropriate to the context of the interpreted interaction.
- 6.4 Interpreters may advertise their services but what is advertised must be accurate, relevant and must not mislead.
- 6.5 Interpreters are expected to support their colleagues in the course of their duties.

6.6 Interpreters should co-operate with and, where possible, support other communication professionals (e.g. speech to text reporters, notetakers, lipspeakers, LSPs – Deafblind Manual, etc) in order to ensure the provision of the best quality service to all consumers.