



# **Good Practice Guide**

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## Plain English Summary

This Good Practice Guide outlines what RISLI expects of interpreters. It makes clear that the service user is most important. The Good Practice Guide is a guide for professional conduct.

We expect interpreters to:

- Behave well at all times, and act in a manner that would be expected of an interpreter.
- Remember to think of confidentiality. Be careful not to share information with others where you do not need to.
- Be neutral and do not put forward or be led by your own personal views when interpreting.
- Take responsibility and be honest with service users.
- Only work in working conditions you are happy with.
- Act professionally when dealing with service users and other interpreters.
- Maintain your continuing professional development (CPD) requirements and follow the law at all times.

**Please note this is a short plain English summary. Please refer to the full Guide of Good Practice for a full guidance as to best practices and expected behaviour.**

## Section 1: Purpose

- 1.1 The Regulatory Centre for Irish Sign Language Interpreters Ireland CLG has been established for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a registration and quality assurance scheme of Irish Sign Language Interpreters.
- 1.2 Under the Irish Sign Language Act of 2017, a court or public body can only engage a person to provide Irish Sign Language (“ISL”) interpretation whose competence has been verified by an accreditation body. RISLI has been appointed as the accreditation body.
- 1.3 RISLI maintains a public register of accredited Irish Sign Language interpreters on [www.risli.ie](http://www.risli.ie).
- 1.4 A review of the ISL Act clarified what RISLI has the power to do and not to do. RISLI’s role under the ISL Act is limited to operating an accreditation scheme. RISLI does not have the legal authority to operate a complaints process or impose sanctions on registered interpreters. In addition, RISLI cannot enforce a binding Code of Conduct for ISL interpreters. RISLI has conducted a review of its policies to ensure they were keeping with in line with the ISL Act 2017.
- 1.5 The Good Practice Guide ("the Guide") offers valuable guidance for both service users and interpreters. By outlining best practices and expected behaviours, the Guide helps registered interpreters understand and achieve the highest professional standards. We encourage all registered interpreters to read and apply the Guide in their work.
- 1.6 The Guide is intended as guidance for professional conduct. Although complaints to RISLI cannot be filed based on the Guide, it can be a helpful resource in addressing concerns and fostering positive communication between service users and interpreters.
- 1.7 RISLI acknowledges other policies and documents that were used in the drafting of Good Practice Guide. In particular, the Code of Ethics from the Council of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (CISLI), the Interpreter

## Section 2: Professional Conduct

2.1 Interpreters are expected to maintain professional conduct at all times, including:

- a) Providing a faithful and accurate interpretation to the best of their ability.
- b) Demonstrating professionalism in all interactions, including negotiations, obtaining preparation materials, and presenting a professional demeanour and appearance. Conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation. Minimising unnecessary distractions during the interpreting assignment from mobiles phones, smart watches and/or other devices.
- c) Act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work.
- d) Being punctual and prepared for all assignments.
- e) Maintaining the reputation of the interpreting profession through their actions.
- f) Honouring confirmed assignments unless there are unavoidable and justifiable reasons for cancellation.
- g) Safeguarding confidential information obtained during assignments and avoiding any personal gain from it.

## Section 3: Data Protection and Confidentiality

3.1 While this document is for guidance, interpreters must understand and comply with data protection law. Interpreters may be either data processors or data controllers, depending, for instance, on whether they are freelance or contractors, each with distinct legal obligations. Interpreters should familiarise themselves with these roles and ensure their practice complies with data protection law, taking legal advice as necessary.

3.2 Interpreters should respect the privacy of service users and maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained during their professional duties. This includes any information accessed as a result of an interpreting assignment. Information about interpreting assignments should not be shared through any medium, such as social media, email, or personal conversations, without explicit prior consent from the relevant service users involved in the assignment.

3.3 Notwithstanding the above, RISLI acknowledges that interpreters may be legally obliged to disclose confidential information in certain circumstances. This includes situations where the protection of children, vulnerable adults, or others at risk requires disclosure.

3.4 Interpreters may engage with other parties involved in an interpreting assignment for preparation, debriefing, or reflection purposes. However, such engagement should protect the privacy of the service users and the confidentiality of any information shared. Where necessary and appropriate, obtaining documented consent to share information is recommended.

3.5 To ensure optimal and consistent service quality, interpreters may disclose selected information about an interpreting assignment with other parties, such as co-working interpreters or agencies. However, such disclosures should protect the privacy of service users, and the confidentiality of any information shared.

3.6 Interpreters may disclose select information about an interpreting assignment within confidential settings for professional development purposes, such as supervision, mentoring, or Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities. However, such disclosures should protect the privacy of service users, and the confidentiality of any information shared.

## Section 4: Impartiality

4.1 Within any interpreting assignment, interpreters should be committed to providing a faithful and accurate

interpretation which is also culturally and linguistically appropriate while maintaining impartiality and objectivity.

- 4.2 Interpreters maintain objectivity by refraining from any unnecessary alterations to the source information. Any adjustments made should solely be to ensure, accuracy as well as cultural and linguistic appropriateness.
- 4.3 Interpreters should not discriminate against service users or co-interpreters, for example based on their gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, nationality or ethnic origin, race and membership of the Traveller community.
- 4.4 To ensure impartiality, interpreters should decline assignments where they feel unable to set aside personal biases or reactions that might influence their interpretation.
- 4.5 Interpreters should disclose to the service users involved in an interpreting assignment any factors that may compromise their impartiality during the assignment.

## Section 5: Accountability for Professional Decisions

5.1 Interpreters should be accountable for their professional decisions and should:

- a) Demonstrate sound professional judgment, accept responsibility and be accountable for their decisions. In making professional decisions, interpreters shall hold paramount the needs of service users.
- b) Only accept assignments for which they have the necessary qualifications and expertise. When in doubt, consult with the client, experienced colleagues, or relevant organisation for guidance, especially for specialised interpreting work.
- c) Provide accurate and current information about their skills, qualifications, experience, and registration status.
- d) Identify and disclose any personal circumstances or conflicts of interest (actual or potential) that may affect their impartiality.
- e) Be transparent with service users about any interpretation errors, taking appropriate action to address them.
- f) Prioritise their well-being and adjust their workload or cease practising if their physical or mental health affects their ability to interpret effectively.

## Section 6: Working Conditions

6.1 To provide high-quality interpretation, interpreters should advocate for suitable working conditions before and during assignments. This includes:

- a) Requesting a co-interpreter due to the nature, length or complexity of an assignment.
- b) Requesting a Deaf interpreter<sup>1</sup> due to the nature of an assignment. For example, in situations such as Deafblind interpreting, interpreting between two signed languages, working with people with limited ISL, English or with special needs, particularly in legal, medical or mental health settings
- c) Ensuring adequate rest breaks, especially for lengthy or complex assignments.
- d) Maintaining clear visibility and minimising visual distractions for service users.
- e) Minimising background noise.

The *CISLI Occupational Health & Safety Policy* may be useful in this regard.<sup>1</sup>

6.2 If working conditions are inadequate, the interpreter should inform the parties present that these conditions may  
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<sup>1</sup> Deaf Interpreters are sign language interpreters who are Deaf. Their fluency in ISL and a deep and intimate knowledge of the Deaf community support the interpretation of meaning, bridging linguistic or cultural barriers. They most often work in tandem with hearing interpreters to bring greater understanding and clarity, in situations such as interpreting between two signed languages, working with people with special needs or Deafblind interpreting, particularly in legal, medical or mental health settings. For some assignments, a Deaf interpreter and a hearing interpreter will be required. In cases where the Deaf person has limited ISL, English or special needs, it is advised to book both a Deaf and a hearing interpreter. This is to ensure high-quality working standards and to ensure the Deaf person's needs are met.

hinder effective interpretation. If the interpreter believes the conditions prevent them from providing accurate and complete interpretation, the interpreter may withdraw from the assignment.

6.3 To ensure optimum quality of interpretation, interpreters should prepare appropriately for assignments by:

- Obtaining and reviewing preparation materials.
- Consulting with service users to discuss the upcoming assignment.
- Researching the relevant topics.
- Seeking guidance from experienced interpreters.

Interpreters should maintain confidentiality throughout the preparation process.

6.4 To maintain professional standards and ensure focus on the interpreting task, interpreters should not undertake non-interpreting duties during an assignment unless explicitly agreed beforehand.

## Section 7: Professional Relationships

7.1 Interpreters should always respect the dignity, privacy and autonomy of services users.

7.2 As professionals, interpreters should distinguish between social and professional interactions, ensuring that all relationships are maintained within appropriate, ethical boundaries.

7.3 Interpreters should treat everyone involved in an interpreting assignment with respect, courtesy, fairness, good faith, and mutual cooperation.

7.4 Interpreters are encouraged to resolve any conflicts with colleagues in a professional and constructive manner.

7.5 Interpreters should refrain from any public action or statements that could harm the reputation of RISLI or other interpreters.

## Section 8: Continuing Professional Development

8.1 Interpreters should endeavour to continually strive to interpret to the best of their ability. Interpreters will continue to improve and develop their skills through relevant CPD and education. This will include, but is not limited to, meeting their CPD and work practice requirements for maintenance of accreditation.

8.2 Interpreters should notify RISLI if they are unable to meet their CPD or work practice requirements. Interpreters may apply to have their CPD requirements reduced or suspended for the current CPD cycle. See *CPD and Work Practice Policy*.

8.3 Interpreters should keep up to date with developments in interpreting practice, as well as interpreting theory and its application, and apply new knowledge, CPD and training into their practice where appropriate.

8.4 Interpreters must embed reflective practice in their development as an interpreter. This is facilitated through Unstructured CPD as part of CPD requirements of the RISLI. see *CPD and Work Practice Policy*.

Ratified by the Board of Directors 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026