

# Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters

## Guide to Code of Conduct & Practice

**The following guide should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and Practice**

### Introduction

It is essential that certain standards of professional conduct be observed in order that the Association and its members advance the status of Sign Language Interpreters.

These standards are necessary to maintain the status of the profession of Sign Language Interpreting and relationship of trust between Interpreters and Users.

The rules of professional conduct are designed to ensure the proper performance of the Interpreter, essential for the furtherance of the profession. The failure of the Interpreter to observe these rules must as a last resort result in disciplinary sanction. The acceptance of these rules and the need for disciplinary sanction ensures the highest possible standard.

### Confidentiality

1. This principle is vitally important. It is essential to the relationship of trust, which must exist between the Interpreter and the User. The Interpreter has the right to withdraw or not accept further work if something of a confidential nature is disclosed resulting in the Interpreter feeling unable to provide an impartial service.
2. In particular circumstances a Court may require an Interpreter to break the obligation of confidentiality. In situations of uncertainty guidance should be sought from the Director.
3. Interpreters should be careful about using knowledge and information gained through interpreting work which might be of use to the Interpreter in other circumstances or of benefit in terms of obtaining interpreting work.

## Interpreting Skills and Knowledge

4. The Interpreter should give a commitment to provide the best possible service within his/her abilities.
5. It is the responsibility of the Interpreters to obtain as much information in advance of an assignment as is possible to determine as to whether they would be able to undertake the work.

It is recognised however, that there may be situations, which arise from time to time where the level of complexity was not known to the Interpreter before the event. However, it remains the responsibility of the Interpreter that should they find they are in a situation that is more complex than they feel able to handle, that the User/Contractor should be informed.

6. Members should seek to take every opportunity to attend training or conferences [linked to the work of interpreting to improve background knowledge and increase skills and knowledge.

## Impartiality

7. Again it is recognised because of the shortage of Interpreters there may be times when Interpreters may find themselves being asked to undertake interpreting work which would bring an Interpreter's impartiality into question.

Where possible Interpreters should check out who they are to be interpreting for and if at all possible refrain from interpreting in such situations. It might be an emergency where no other Interpreter is available, e.g., person in Police custody. Careful consideration however should always be given and advice sought on such matters if Interpreters are at all unsure.

8. If the Hearing or Deaf User is not accustomed to using Interpreter Services, or have previously used people such as relatives, friends or perhaps a Social Worker, they may be used to having personal opinions of the communicator expressed.

However, there may be instances where a User may want to know where they can get other advice and if in the instance where the Deaf Consumer is not aware of, say, the local Social Work Department, it would seem appropriate to provide that information. Always check with the appropriate User if this is in order. One must always be careful however not to then become involved in various discussions about the service provided.

## Professionalism

9. Due regard must be given to the introduction of this guide to good practice.

This also means ensuring that assignments once accepted are dealt with professionally.

- a) Seeking to ensure that appropriate preparation is undertaken
  - b) Arriving in good time for the assignment (this means at least half an hour prior to)
  - c) Dressed appropriately:- casual or formal as appropriate to the situation  
Remember the Interpreter will often be seen as a reflection of the User
  - d) Providing a professional helpful service within the bounds of the Interpreter's role
  - e) Should a situation arise which may lead to disagreement with regard to the Interpreters role, it is always better to withdraw and if necessary follow this up later through other channels and inform the Association of the situation.
- 10 It is in the interests and benefit of Users that there is trust and co-operation between Interpreters and where it is known that an Interpreter is already providing a service; this must not be discussed with the User if a different Interpreter takes over the work. An Interpreter in such circumstances must always communicate with the Interpreter or agency acting for that User
11. Whilst Interpreters may advertise their services this must take into account the need to maintain mutual trust and confidence whilst still permitting Interpreters to market their services and to compete with one another.

12. When accepting work the interpreter must ensure that he/she has the necessary information to enable him/her to decide immediately whether the assessment can be accepted and carried out completely
- a) He/she will be available on the date and at the time and is sure that he/she is able to travel to the place required
  - b) To check the language match between the User and the Interpreter
  - c) The Interpreter is competent to carry out the assignment and has time for the necessary preparation to familiarise him/herself with any particular terminology or procedures
  - d) The Interpreter is, and is seen to be, in a position of neutrality.

If for any reason the Interpreter cannot carry out an assignment which he/she has accepted, where possible, either the client or the booking agency should be informed immediately and asked if the work may be carried out by another member of the Association. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Interpreter to secure another Interpreter for the assignment.

## Professional Fees

13. The interpreters should be guided by the recommended scale of fees established by the Association. The fees charged must always be seen to be fair and reasonable. Factors to be considered in establishing the fee:-
- a) the complexity of the assignment
  - b) skill or particular knowledge required
  - c) the amount of preparation work to be undertaken
  - d) in certain situations a fee for travel may be negotiated.
14. If in the course of their undertaking interpreting work the Interpreters meet a situation or a difficulty which is not covered by the Code of Conduct, it should be brought to the attention of the Association. In this way the Association will be continually ensuring that the Code of Conduct acts not only as a guide to the behaviour of the Interpreters, but also as a tool of support in their work.

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