



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING IN SCOTLAND: A LANDSCAPE REVIEW

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Glossary

ASLI	Association of Sign Language Interpreters
AtW	Access to Work
BALS	Bachelor of Arts in British Sign Language (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies)
BDA	British Deaf Association
BSL	British Sign Language
CACPD	Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (now Signature and NRCPD)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EFSLI	European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	Higher Education
HSCP	Health and Social Care Partnership
HWU	Heriot-Watt University
IRP	Independent Registration Panel (now NRCPD)
MA	Master of Arts
MSc	Master of Science
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (in Australia)
NHS	National Health Service
NHSGGC	National Health Service Glasgow and Greater Clyde
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NQI	Newly qualified interpreter (someone who has recently become a registered interpreter)
NRCPD	National Registers for Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People

NUBSLI	National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
QMU	Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
PEAS	Promoting Equal Access to Services
RSLI	Registered Sign Language Interpreter
SASLI	Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (changing to SRLPDC)
SCoD	Scottish Council on Deafness (now deafscotland)
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SRLPDC	Scottish Register for Language Professionals with the Deaf Community (formerly SASLI)
ToTs	Training of the Trainers
TSLI	Trainee Sign Language Interpreter
VRI	Video Remote Interpreting
VRS	Video Relay Services
WASLI	World Association of Sign Language Interpreters

1. Introduction

1.1 The Landscape Review

1.1.1 Purpose

The Landscape Review was commissioned by the Scottish Government, which funded the project team at Queen Margaret University to conduct a scoping study of British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting in Scotland.

The study was motivated by the need for more detailed information about BSL interpreting, to inform policy developments around the implementation of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015¹ and the BSL National Plan 2017-2023² that followed. The BSL National Plan 2017-23 identified the need for more evidence of what is happening at present in order to inform decisions around how best to deliver services and target improvements to existing provision. The Landscape Review research contributes towards three actions from the BSL National Plan 2017-2023, namely:

- Action 7 Review a range of current and on-going Scottish and UK evidence about the BSL/English interpreting landscape (for example the UK Market Review of BSL and communication provision, and the Scottish Government funded review of the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)).
- Action 8 Analyse the learning from actions we are taking forward in health, education and justice (referred to in this plan) to strengthen Scotland's interpreting profession.
- Action 9 Consider what further work is needed to ensure that a strong and skilled pool of BSL/English interpreters are working efficiently across Scotland.

Undertaking this research presented the opportunity to bring together the different perspectives around BSL interpreting in Scotland in a unique study that generates a holistic picture of the current landscape. Additionally it has provided an important avenue for interpreters to share their experiences, as most consultation events relating to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 to date have rightly been directed primarily at the BSL community. However, the current landscape is such that provision of services in BSL is usually delivered via interpreters, making their input to strategic decision-making essential.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/11/contents/enacted>

² <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00526382.pdf>

1.1.2 Research

The general remit of the research was agreed with the Scottish Government in December 2018. The scoping exercise was designed to identify:

- relevant documentation/reports/literature
- current progression routes to registration and post registration career options
- where interpreters live and work
- how interpreters source their work
- barriers to interpreters' professional practice.

The research was designed to incorporate the various perspectives on interpreting and interpreter provision in order to capture a holistic picture of the current landscape. To achieve this, different data sets were generated. These different data sets were designed to represent the perspectives of the BSL community, public bodies, interpreters and interpreting stakeholders.

Further detail about how the research was conducted is provided in Section 2.

1.1.3 Report

Creation of this report has focused on providing the details necessary to fulfil the purpose of the study; to inform future decision-making in relation to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. The report is not designed as a fully comprehensive history or detailed description of the BSL/English interpreting profession in Scotland. The information here is intended to provide sufficient information to inform ongoing decision making, with the report considered more as a functional document than academic literature.

The remainder of Section 1 provides background information about the current landscape. Section 2 details the data generated in the Landscape Review. Section 3 provides a summary of the main themes arising from the data, with Section 4 detailing the report's recommendations for future action.

1.2 The Scottish Context

This section includes brief details of reports directly relevant to BSL/English interpreting in Scotland and additionally outlines the existing landscape with respect to the registration of BSL/English interpreters in Scotland and current routes to registration.

1.2.2 Key Reports

Although the Landscape Review aims to bring together different perspectives on BSL/English interpreting services in Scotland as a whole, other bodies have previously conducted reviews with particular foci. Those with particular relevance to the Landscape Review are briefly summarised and reviewed here.

Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)

The Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) was, until early 2019, a membership and registration body for British Sign Language/English interpreters in Scotland. This body was established in 1981, originally as a sub-division of the Scottish Council on Deafness, and as an independent dual role body in May 1982. It has produced a number of reports with relevance to the Landscape Review.

Its 2002 report, *Creating Linguistic Access for Deaf and Deafblind People*³, details the number of interpreting professionals and routes to qualification at the time. This report specifies a total of 39 registered BSL/English interpreters in Scotland, although many were employed in other capacities, and some worked as interpreters for specific organisations. In reality this meant that there were only around 15 interpreters available to cover ad hoc community work across the country.

The report describes how, at that time, the only interpreter training available in Scotland was the Certificate programme run on a part-time basis at Heriot-Watt University. This programme began with a pilot in 1996. The report notes that delivery of this training was problematic for a number of reasons:

- the lack of specialist staff employed at the University
- the lack of sufficient BSL tuition across Scotland, which meant that applicants to the course arrived with low level BSL skills
- part-time provision restricting teaching time
- most students were self-funded and the course was expensive to run
- the level of the course was insufficient for training BSL/English interpreters; the two year programme was equivalent to one year of full-time undergraduate study
- recruitment to, and output from, the programme were relatively low

³ <http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/resources/deaf/sasli/access.html#1>

Completion of the Heriot-Watt Certificate did not automatically entitle full registration with SASLI. This typically required a further 18 months of experience and assessment by the Association. At the time of the 2002 report, 10 graduates were trainees with SASLI and only eight had successfully passed SASLI's requirements to become SASLI registered interpreters.

The 2002 report states that the ideal would be for a three or four year full-time degree programme to be created, which could then lead graduates on to studying specialist areas of interpreting such as medical, educational and legal interpreting. The report also notes the growing use of deaf interpreters/translators within media settings; recognising the need for these translators to be appropriately trained and qualified. These details provide useful comparison for the updated information reported later within the Landscape Review.

In 2008 SASLI was funded £1.3 million for the Building Bridges Project. This was an ambitious project designed to:

- ensure continuity of quality and standards of BSL/English interpreting
- create a sustained pathway to interpreter registration
- increase the number of SASLI registered interpreters

The report shows that collaboration was a key element of the work planned for this project; however, many of the planned outcomes were not achieved. The project was re-focussed part way through and an extension to the timescale was negotiated. The key outcomes of the project were the registration of nine additional interpreters to SASLI, the running of the ToTs2 (Training of Trainers) programme at Heriot-Watt University and development work towards the creation of the MA (Hons) British Sign Language (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies). The latter has been the only sustainable benefit from the funding. The project report, Building Bridges: Project Evaluation Report (2011) is not publicly available⁴. However, it details that at the start of the project, in 2008, there were 54 registered BSL/English interpreters in Scotland, mainly located in the Central Belt. It was noted that some areas of the country, notably the islands and Borders had no local provision. The apprenticeship pathway to registration developed with the project funding was designed to be sustainable, but in fact happened only once, with nine new registrants as a result. The report indicates that the objective to develop a network of experienced interpreters to act as mentors for future apprentices and trainees was not achieved.

In 2017, £30,000 Scottish Government funding was made available to enable SASLI to commission three further reports to underpin the necessary decision-making required to ensure the Association was functioning effectively: a review of the Complaints and Concerns Procedure; a Standards

⁴ SASLI/SRLPDC has given permission for the report findings to be included here.

Review; and an Organisational Structure Review. These reports were delivered in 2018, but are not publicly available⁵.

The latter report was designed to identify whether SASLI should continue as a registration body or as a membership association. The recommendation of the report was that neither of these options was desirable and that SASLI should maintain a dual function. In February 2019 the membership elected for SASLI to become a registration only body. Subsequent discussions suggest that an independent membership association might also be established.

The Standards Review set out to explore the regulation and ratification of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the possibility of SASLI becoming a quality assurance/accreditation body for CPD provision. The recommendations from the report centre on the refinement of the existing SASLI CPD process, establishment of a short term working group to facilitate this and consideration of development of a charter mark or ISO9001 or a similar standards benchmark.

The review of the complaints procedure identified the need for making procedures easier to find on the website, improving accessibility for BSL users, and the potential for introducing a process for raising concerns about interpreters.

The Scottish Government

In 2005 the then Scottish Executive published Investigation of Access to Public Services in Scotland using British Sign Language⁶. The report was commissioned from a team based at the University of Bristol, led by Professor Jim Kyle, to explore the views of the BSL community. The most common concern amongst the BSL community was the lack of availability of interpreters. The report detailed problematic access to public services in BSL, and no services at all for those in the Western Isles and Shetland. Particular difficulties were encountered with the health service and in contact with the police. Respondents expressed concern around interpreter confidentiality, particularly when an individual might work with an interpreter in an employment context and then encounter the same interpreter for medical appointments. There was also concern around the quality of interpreting.

Relevant recommendations from this report include:

- establishing a programme for the training of BSL tutors to increase the number available across the country
- increasing the training and provision of BSL/English interpreters.
- enhancing the standard of interpreter training
- the potential for use of online interpreting for those living in remote areas

⁵ SASLI/SRLPDC has given permission for the report findings to be included here.

⁶

<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170706135640/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2005/05/23131410/14116>

- clarity over the policy for provision of interpreters, detailing responsibility for funding

The Long and Winding Road: A Roadmap to British Sign Language (2008)⁷ was part of the British Sign Language and Linguistic Access Working Group formed by the then Scottish Executive. SASLI was represented in this group. This report details access issues for deaf people more generally, not exclusively those who communicate in BSL. The report states that in April 2008 there were 65 BSL/English interpreters in Scotland, 55 SASLI registrants, 10 working towards SASLI registration following completion of the Heriot-Watt programme and a further five soon to complete that training. In addition seven interpreters were registered with the Independent Registration Panel (IRP) which has now become the National Register for Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD). The report indicates that at this point, the future of the Heriot-Watt Diploma programme was uncertain. It was not Scottish Government funded and the low numbers of students entering the programme made it financially unsustainable.

The 2008 report recognises the need for increased BSL tuition, at the higher levels of qualification, to facilitate recruitment of appropriate students to interpreter training programmes.

A particular shortage of interpreters working in educational settings was noted, and discussed in more depth within the separate study on Linguistic Access to Education for Deaf Pupils and Students in Scotland⁸

The 2008 report recommends increasing the number of BSL/English interpreters through:

- increased support for BSL tuition, through support of tutors to deliver BSL classes at a higher level and providing training for trainers of BSL tutors
- delivery of an apprenticeship route to interpreter registration by SASLI
- supporting Heriot-Watt University to upgrade their interpreter training course to a post-graduate degree level programme
- evaluating the potential for online interpreting, including the pilot undertaken in 2007/8

7

<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20180517125341/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/07/01102537/0>

8

<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20180518145839/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/02/11155449/29>

British Deaf Association

The emphasis on the need for skilled interpreters in healthcare is highlighted in the Report on Health Services Provision to BSL Users in Scotland (2013)⁹ published by the British Deaf Association, a deaf-led association which aims to improve the lives of deaf people in Britain. Their survey revealed the use of unregistered interpreters in situations identified as requiring skilled professionals. In some situations there was not an appropriate match of gender between the patient and the interpreter. The respondents in the survey were clear that having an adequate interpreter made for a much better experience in healthcare appointments. However, the respondents stated the difficulty of sourcing an interpreter outside of normal working hours. These might be times when freelance interpreters choose not to work. Other problems identified concerned the accessibility of healthcare appointments, poor Wi-Fi in hospital being insufficient for communicating via video telephony, clinicians not understanding the need for an interpreter and particular difficulty in getting interpreters during inpatient stays.

Deaf Action

Deaf Action commissioned a scoping study of the prevalence of deafness in Scotland, in order to predict future trends and needs. Deafness in Scotland (2016)¹⁰ incorporated the most recent findings from a variety of sources, providing a figure of approximately 6,000 BSL users in Scotland with a fifth being under 15 years of age. The report anticipates the use of BSL in the deaf community will remain constant although demand for interpreting services is likely to increase due to greater awareness of need following the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

1.2.2 Historic Initial Interpreter Training in Scotland

The first BSL/English interpreter training programme in Scotland was the Certificate programme in Interpreting Studies and Skills (BSL/English) run from 1997 at Heriot-Watt University. According to The Long and Winding Road: A Roadmap to British Sign Language (2008), 62 students achieved this award between 2000 and 2007. The programme was delivered on a part-time basis over two years and was designed to be the equivalent of one year of full-time study. It did not lead directly to registered status with SASLI. In 2006 the Certificate was upgraded to a Graduate Diploma course (at SCQF Level 10), run on the same basis. The last graduates from this programme completed their training in 2011. Neither of these programmes fulfilled the requirements for registration with CACDP/IRP/NRCPD.

⁹ https://bda.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BDA_Report_on_Health_Services_Provision_to_BSL_Users_in_Scotland.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.deafaction.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Deafness-in-Scotland-A-recent-analysis.pdf>

SASLI piloted their own apprenticeship pathway to the register as part of the Building Bridges funding from the Scottish Government. This ran between 2009 and 2011 in conjunction with Sign Language International/University of Leeds. The apprenticeship programme ran only once and produced nine SASLI-registered interpreters who qualified with a Postgraduate Diploma in Interpreting Studies (BSL/English) (at SCQF Level 11) which allowed those interpreters to apply for registration with either SASLI or NRCPD.

1.2.3 Current Initial Interpreter Training in Scotland

There are currently four options for initial interpreter training in Scotland. This section briefly outlines this provision and the numerical output of the four programmes.

BSL Scotland

BSL Scotland is a Glasgow-based NVQ centre that offers SQA courses in BSL, a Preparatory Level 6 Sign Language Interpreting programme and a Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting Portfolio Building programme (SCQF Level 10). Students must have NVQ Level 6 qualification in BSL before commencing on the programme. The Preparatory programme runs for one weekend a month over 12 months. The Portfolio Building programme also runs over a 12 month period, with the first cohort starting in 2012. Successful completion of the NVQ Level 6 Diploma in British Sign Language Interpreting allows students to register with NRCPD, or with SASLI/SRLPDC following a further 'skills check'. Courses are run according to demand rather than on an annual basis.

Deaf Perspective

Based in East Kilbride, Deaf Perspective (Scotland) Ltd is an NVQ centre that offers an Interpreter Development Course and an NVQ Level 6 Diploma in British Sign Language Interpreting Portfolio Building programme (SCQF Level 10). Students must have NVQ Level 6 qualification in BSL before commencing on the programme. This programme commenced in 2012. The Development programme runs for one weekend a month over 11 months, while completion of the Portfolio Building programme can take up to four years. Two and a half years for completion of the whole programme is usual. Successful completion of the NVQ Level 6 Diploma in British Sign Language Interpreting allows students to register with NRCPD, or with SASLI/SRLPDC following a further 'skills check'.

Deaf Services Lanarkshire

Deaf Services Lanarkshire is based in Coatbridge. The organisation provides a range of services to the deaf community in Lanarkshire together with training courses. These courses include a Professional Development Award in Deaf Studies (SCQF Level 8) and the SASLI SQA Customised Award in BSL/English Interpreting (SCQF Level 10) which began in January 2018. The PDA course runs on alternate weekends for a year, while the Interpreter Training runs on alternate weekends for two years. Completion of the

Interpreter Training programme will enable students to register with SASLI/SRLPDC following a further 'skills check'. The qualification is currently being mapped by NRCPD.

Heriot-Watt University

The first cohort of students on the MA (Hons) British Sign Language (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies) (SCQF Level 11) started study in 2012. Establishment of the programme was supported by the Scottish Government via the Scottish Funding Council. The programme has an annual intake of 12 funded Scottish or EU students each September and additional students from the rest of the UK. The programme involves four years of full-time study, with Year 3 comprising a placement within the BSL community. Graduation with an MA (Hons) allows students to register with NRCPD, or with SASLI/SRLPDC following a further 'skills check'. Four cohorts have now graduated from the programme, with the first intake graduating in 2016.

Student output

The following student numbers were reported in respect of the qualifications that lead directly to interpreter registration (NVQ Level 6 Diploma and MA (Hons) British Sign Language (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies)). The SASLI Customised Award has also been included here, although this has not yet been mapped to the National Occupational Standards (NOS).

Table 1: Initial Interpreter Training Output

Provider	Successfully Completed	Current
BSL Scotland	17	4
Deaf Perspective	9	11
Deaf Services Lanarkshire	n/a	6
Heriot-Watt University	37	14 (Year 1) 34 (Years 2-4)

Although graduates from the MA (Hons) programme at Heriot-Watt University have only been emerging since 2016, they currently comprise the greatest input to the interpreting profession of all the Scotland-based training programmes. This programme is now feeding in newly qualified interpreters (NQI) on an annual basis and is the only programme to be doing so.

Data from the four training providers indicate that the vast majority of interpreters who register via the NVQ route remain working in Scotland. For example, Deaf Perspective reported that seven of their graduates were working full-time in Scotland and 13 of the graduates from BSL Scotland remain in Scotland. However, the number of Heriot-Watt University graduates remaining in Scotland is also high. The institution reports that 24 of its 37 graduates are working as interpreters in Scotland with seven working

elsewhere in the UK. Some of the remainder are continuing their studies in other fields of work associated with the BSL community. This indicates that the majority of NQI in Scotland are graduates of the Heriot-Watt programme.

1.2.4 Interpreter Registration

There are currently two registration bodies with BSL/English interpreter registrants in Scotland; these are the National Registers of Communication Professionals Working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) and the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) which is changing to the Scottish Register of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community (SRLPDC). The latter organisation operates only in Scotland, whereas NRCPD is a UK-wide body. This is notable given the permeability of the Scottish/English border, which is crossed in both directions by both interpreters and the BSL community.

It should be noted that a minority of interpreters choose to register with both organisations. In March 2019 the number of interpreters doing so was 15.

Registration of interpreters is voluntary, but has become an expectation within the profession. Use of registered interpreters is being mandated by an increasing number of public bodies across the UK.

Further details about registration and standards are incorporated into Section 2 of this report.

NRCPD

The NRCPD is the main UK-wide register for BSL/English interpreters, having evolved from the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) register established in 1982¹¹. On 1st August 2019 the number of UK BSL/English interpreting registrants was 1,217 with 79 based in Scotland and 23 of the 275 UK's regulated trainees also based in Scotland. Details of the criteria for admission to the register, or to become a regulated trainee, are available at <https://www.nrcpd.org.uk/registration>. NRCPD was originally part of Signature (formerly the Council for Advancement of Communication with Deaf People, CACDP) but has now shifted to independent status. It is funded solely by registrant fees.

SASLI/SRLPDC

SASLI was the oldest BSL interpreting organisation in the UK, having been established in 1981. In the past, the organisation has benefited from regular funding by the Scottish Government. Historically the Association has functioned as both a registration body and a membership organisation. More recently it also became an awarding body, with the commissioning of the SASLI SQA Customised Award in BSL/English Interpreting.

On 1st August the SASLI/SRLPDC register listed 52 full registrants and nine trainees. With no further Scottish Government funding available to support the

¹¹ <https://www.nrcpd.org.uk/history>

running of the organisation it will now be expected to cover costs through registrant/membership fees.

Registrant numbers

The number of registrants in Scotland has built up over the years. Figures reported elsewhere indicate that in 2002 there were 39 registered interpreters and in 2008 there were 55 SASLI registered and seven IRP (now NRCPD) registered interpreters in Scotland. This number has continued to grow to the current figures.

Table 2: Registered Interpreters in Scotland, August 2019

Register	Trainee	Registered/Full Registration
NRCPD	23	79
SASLI/SRLPDC	9	52

It can be expected that there is still some overlap of registration, with a minority of interpreters dual registered with both registration bodies. Data from this Landscape Review indicate that in March 2019 there were 109 registered interpreters based in Scotland.

1.2.5 Post-Registration Initiatives

One of the aims of the Landscape Review was to address the following action within the BSL National Plan 2017-2023.

Action 8 Analyse the learning from actions we are taking forward in health, education and justice (referred to in this plan) to strengthen Scotland's interpreting profession.

The other actions mentioned here relate to numbers 47 and 62 from the BSL National Plan 2017-2023. These have been achieved via two Scottish Government funded projects delivered by Heriot-Watt University and Queen Margaret University.

PEAS, Heriot-Watt University

The Promoting Equal Access to Services (PEAS) project was funded £130K by the Scottish Government to address some of the supply issues experienced within the health and justice sectors. It was additionally designed to ensure Heriot-Watt graduates were ready for professional practice and to encourage them to remain in Scotland on completion of their studies. The project ran from 2018 to 2019 for graduates from the Heriot-Watt MA (Hons) programme, who entered their internship prior to starting their professional practice. The project was run by Professor Graham Turner at Heriot-Watt University in partnership with Police Scotland and National Health Service Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC). The Heriot-Watt team has submitted

a separate evaluation of the project outcomes to the Scottish Government¹². The Landscape Review included interviews with three of the project team.

The experience of PEAS project reflects many of the challenges and concerns raised by other training providers later in this report.

The importance of collaborative working was highlighted. This issue became particularly evident when intended plans for the interns were not fulfilled, indicating the critical nature of the planning phases of such projects to ensure an effective structure. The project evidences how meaningful internships need to be of longer duration than the three months scheduled within the scheme. The evaluation report also questions the value of such an internship for new graduates from the HWU programme and indicates that such internships might be more appropriate for more experienced practitioners. There is further evidence that interpreting interns are best managed and monitored by those with an understanding of their professional needs. Staffing the project proved difficult and the challenge of supporting such a project with suitably qualified staff was recognised.

On reflection, it is clear that the relevant expertise in Scotland is in short supply, and future work in this vein should be carefully structured in light of this factor. (Lessons from PEAS Project, Turner et al 2019 p4)

Ultimately the two interns involved in the initiative lacked the exposure to BSL and interpreting practise that they had anticipated. They also experienced first-hand both the subtle and overt hostility evident within the interpreting profession (this horizontal violence is discussed in Section 2.6 of this report). This illustrates the importance of 'buy in' from the profession for initiatives that involve them. For a profession that is comprised of mostly self-employed practitioners, peer support is crucial. One of the unexpected sticking points with the NHS internship was the refusal of interpreters working in that context to allow the interns to shadow them.

Qualified working practitioners must be required, as part of their contract (as modelled by health professionals), to accept shadowing by junior colleagues and developing professionals when working in the public services. (Lessons from PEAS Project, Turner et al 2019 p6)

Unfortunately neither intern reported feeling confident about working within the NHS on completion of their placements. However, the project evidences the value of ensuring that NQI are familiar with NHS settings prior to engaging in healthcare interpreting. Such familiarisation and induction processes could usefully be incorporated into the induction of any interpreters involved in contracted services or employed positions, not just within the NHS but within any public sector.

¹² Heriot-Watt University has given permission for the report findings to be included here.

On one hand, the PEAS project supports the views of those who say that HWU students are not 'work ready' on graduation. On the other it illustrates some potential for embedding interpreters within public sector settings while also highlighting how difficult this is to achieve effectively. The report contributes to the argument for a formal system of ongoing support for NQI across Scotland, as a way of retaining those trained in Scotland to continue their practice here, and also as a way of attracting others to move to Scotland.

Queen Margaret University

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, has developed an online MSc programme to provide an accredited qualification in relation to continuing professional development for interpreters. The programme is accredited at SCQF Level 11, with options to graduate with a Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits), Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits) or MSc (180 credits). All modules are worth 20 credits except for the dissertation (60 credits). The programme design includes two core modules that can be followed by students' selection of six electives focussing on areas of interpreting specialism.

The programme is currently available to students across the UK and is delivered fully online so that geographic location is not a disadvantage. It is a post-registration programme designed as CPD provision for interpreters who are already registered and who have a minimum of three years of professional experience post qualification. The first cohort commenced study in 2017.

QMU received funding from the Scottish Government towards the development and initial delivery of four of the six elective modules on the programme.¹³ Two of the funded modules, on healthcare and mental healthcare were delivered during the 2018/19 academic year. The module on Interpreting in Justice Settings is being delivered in Semester 1 of the 2019/20 academic year, and the final module on Interpreting in Educational Settings will be delivered in Semester 2 of the same year.

In order to ensure that Scotland-based students were able to participate in these elective modules, bursaries were offered to discount the cost of the initial core modules from the programme. Despite this, uptake from interpreters in Scotland has not been as enthusiastic as expected, although proportionally there are more students from Scotland than from elsewhere in the UK.

To date the following number of students from Scotland have completed, or are undertaking study in the funded elective modules:

¹³ QMU was awarded £175K for 2017-2020 for two project outcomes, one of which was the development and delivery of four specialist modules for the MSc. The other outcome was the development of skills for other professionals working with the BSL community.

Table 3: Uptake of Specialist Modules by Students from Scotland

Module	Timing	Number of students from Scotland
Interpreting in Healthcare Settings	2018/19 Semester 1	4
Interpreting in Mental Healthcare Settings	2018/19 Semester 2	3
Interpreting in Justice Settings	2019/20 Semester 1	2

At the time of writing this report, the number of students from Scotland for the module on Interpreting in Educational Settings has not yet been confirmed.

With regard to numbers, it is worth noting that a further three Scotland-based students completed Theory and Practice core modules, but have decided not to continue with their studies at present. Additionally, students' selection of elective modules varies according to their professional practice and interests. It is therefore understandable that not as many have chosen each elective as were present in the core modules. However, these four elective modules form a sustainable provision, as they will continue to be delivered to student cohorts in future years.

Students who have completed the modules have commented favourably on their learning experiences.

*It convinced me more than ever that every interpreter ought to be completing further training before entering healthcare settings and that we need to work more collaboratively with healthcare providers too.
(Student on Interpreting in Healthcare Settings)*

*I learned a lot and was encouraged to reflect on my past and current practice. The tutors were skilled and responsive to my questions. I like the whole format of collecting reflective practice notes throughout the module and presenting them in a portfolio at the end with the essay. I found it to be relevant, well-constructed and well run. I feel much better equipped to work safely and reflectively in Mental Health situations.
(Student on Interpreting in Mental Healthcare Settings).*

A full evaluation of this project will be submitted to the Scottish Government at the end of the funded period.

1.3 The Wider Context

1.3.1 Key Reports

It is important not to view the interpreting landscape in Scotland in isolation to that of the rest of the United Kingdom. Data from this study suggest that all the challenges faced by the profession, and those working with interpreters, are shared across the UK. The following reports are applicable to all areas of the UK and have direct relevance to the lives of the BSL community and interpreting profession in Scotland.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

The DWP commissioned The Market Review of British Sign Language and communications provision for people who are deaf or have hearing loss¹⁴ (2017). The report highlights the lack of robust information to inform decision-making and enable effective planning of interpreting services.

The DWP report identifies both the commissioning and supply of inappropriate support, and the insufficiency of interpreter supply, with geographic inconsistency of provision across the UK. The report notes a number of fields of work requiring a high level of interpreting skill and specific knowledge including Higher Education, healthcare, business, justice, media and conferences.

Respondents to the Market Review expressed a concern around the suppression of fees and their avoidance of working with some agencies due to concerns around quality of provision. Concern around the impact of technology on interpreting provision was also noted; particularly that online interpreting should not be seen as a replacement for face-to-face interpreting in sensitive situations or those that are long in duration.

SASLI's submission to The Market Review stated that the greatest demand in Scotland is for interpreting within healthcare and that only 20% of interpreters in the country are involved in online interpreting.

Sign Health

Healthcare access is also the focus of the Sick of It Report: How the Health Service is Failing Deaf People (2014)¹⁵ produced by Sign Health, a UK charity concerned with the health and wellbeing of deaf people. The report details the way that agencies fail to provide appropriate interpreters for healthcare appointments and were also known for not paying the interpreters they employed. The main findings were that the lack of availability of interpreters was being used as a reason for providing unregistered interpreters, that

¹⁴

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630960/government-response-market-review-of-bsl-and-communications-provision-for-people-who-are-deaf-or-have-hearing-loss.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.signhealth.org.uk/sick-of-it-report-professionals/>

particular agencies were known for being late payers, and as such were unable to retain any of the qualified interpreters and, that the National Framework Agreements originally set up to save the NHS money, were not appropriate for the payment of sole traders such as interpreters. Agencies were also found to have provided the name of an interpreter for an appointment, but replaced them with another at the last moment, saying that “the interpreter has cancelled”.

National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI)

NUBSLI, the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters, has produced a variety of reports highly relevant to discussion about the Scottish landscape. *National Framework Agreements: A Dossier of Disgrace* (2018)¹⁶ details why framework agreements are unworkable for all parties. Agencies are cited as the main cause of difficulty, as they profit extensively from the contracts and negate governmental attempts to improve cost-effective delivery. These contractual arrangements directly impact on the quality of services to the BSL community, particularly within the health sector. The difficulties these contracts create for interpreters are additionally leading to many more experienced interpreters leaving, or considering leaving, the profession.

Despite this evidence, these contractual arrangements continue to be rolled out across the UK and data from the Landscape Review reveal the problems they are creating with delivery of BSL/English interpreting in Scotland.

NUBSLI regularly surveys interpreters about working conditions, with the most recent report (2017)¹⁷ indicating the inappropriate use of online interpreting, which is increasingly seen as a cost-saving measure by the public sector. Multiple problems relate to Access to Work (AtW), with the late/non-payment of interpreters and the payment of travel expenses being particular concerns. The report additionally reveals some tensions between experienced practitioners and trainee interpreters who may take on inappropriate work, particularly via the generic multi-language agencies.

1.3.2 Cross-border connections

The growing membership in Scotland of interpreting organisations such as the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) and NUBSLI suggest the need for greater, rather than less, collaboration and cooperation on a UK-wide basis.

As the reports summarised here indicate, the challenges faced by the BSL/English interpreting profession, which are detailed throughout the Landscape Review, are not unique to Scotland. However, one difference has been the long-term Scottish Government funding of SASLI, which is in sharp contrast to the situation in the rest of the UK, where the development of

¹⁶ <https://www.nubsli.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/dossier-of-digrace-cropped.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://nubsli.com/guidance/survey-of-bsl-english-interpreters-working-conditions-2017/#findings>

professional associations and registration bodies has happened without any government backing.

Interpreter training options for Scottish people also exist in England, with Landscape Review data evidencing that these routes to registration continue to contribute to the population of BSL/English interpreters in Scotland. The current university provision is now delivered through two institutions. The University of Wolverhampton runs both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes leading to NRCPD registration, while the University of Central Lancashire runs a part-time postgraduate diploma leading to NRCPD registration. There are a number of centres around the rest of the UK running vocational training programmes leading to the Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting.

1.3.3 Alternative models

Engagement with delegates at the WASLI conference in Paris in July 2019 indicates that problems interpreters in Scotland encounter with legislation such as GDPR (see Section 2.5) are not experienced consistently across Europe. Even within the UK there are contrasting experiences in relation to the sharing of patient information, suggesting that it is not the legislation per se, but it is how it is put into practice that is problematic, as will be discussed later in this report.

How signed language interpreting services are delivered varies from country to country. A comprehensive summary of some of the different approaches within Europe, together with an overview of terms and conditions and funding arrangements are detailed in the latest edition of Sign Language Interpreting in Europe (de Wit 2016)¹⁸. Many of the issues discussed within the Landscape Review are evident elsewhere.

The insecurities experienced by the interpreting profession in Scotland are also reflected elsewhere, although sometimes in different forms. For example, Finland has a similar population to Scotland and a much greater number of interpreters. Although this might seem appealing, the profession there has also experienced disruption. In 2018 the Finnish Social Insurance Institution (Kela), which processes all interpreting bookings, introduced a new system in which they reduced the number of interpreters on their list from 670 to 460 in order to reduce costs. As a result, over 200 self-employed interpreters effectively had their livelihoods withdrawn overnight and many deaf people lost the use of their preferred interpreters.¹⁹

A final comment before reporting the data, is to draw attention to the work of de Meulder and Haualand (2019)²⁰, whose research highlights the reality that

¹⁸ <https://www.mayadewit.nl/european-study/summary>

¹⁹ <https://nubsli.com/nub-posts/hundreds-finnish-sign-language-interpreters-lost-jobs-overnight/>

²⁰ <https://www.ibe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem>

interpreter provision does not ensure equity of access for the deaf community. In an ideal Scotland, many public services would be delivered in a language-concordant way, by professionals who are able to converse in BSL. More importantly de Meulder and Haualand call for a review of the way interpreting provision has become institutionalised. This does not undermine the need for interpreting services, but how they are delivered perhaps needs reconsideration. This is very timely given the focus and findings of the Landscape Review.

2. The Data

In order to capture a holistic understanding of the BSL/English interpreting landscape in Scotland, data were collected that represent the perspectives of the BSL community, public bodies, interpreters and interpreting stakeholders. These data were captured in different ways.

To examine the perceptions of the BSL community, we reviewed the published responses made during the consultation phases of the BSL Bill and the BSL National Plan. These contributions from the BSL community were posted on dedicated Facebook pages. The research team additionally conducted interviews with key BSL stakeholders, including seven representatives from BSL organisations based in Scotland. These interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online at the convenience of the participants.

An online survey was distributed to all public bodies in Scotland. These included some national organisations such as Police Scotland, all local authorities (councils), universities and colleges, regional NHS Boards, and health and social care partnerships. These data were supported by further email correspondence with Further and Higher Education establishments and Freedom of Information Requests (FOI) to Local Authorities.

Data on interpreting stakeholders' perspectives were generated via semi-structured interviews. These were conducted with four interpreting organisations with significant representation in Scotland, the four organisations providing initial interpreter training in Scotland, and three specialist BSL interpreting agencies. These interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, at the convenience of the participants.

Interpreter data were generated via an extensive online survey designed to ascertain details about working practices, experience of training, registration and the challenges encountered in interpreting work. Respondents were invited to participate in semi-structured follow-up interviews. These interviews were all conducted online.

Section 2 details the main findings from these different sets of data. In each sub-section, the details of the data are reported, concluding in a brief summary of what the report authors consider to be key issues. Where the term 'data' is used, it refers to one or more of the forms of data described above. The report includes quotations taken from survey and interview responses. Where appropriate, and with permission, these have been attributed to the individuals/organisations concerned.

2.1 BSL Community

Incorporating the BSL perspective of interpreters and interpreting has been an important element of the Landscape Review. This was achieved through examining contributions from the BSL community to both the consultation phases of the BSL Bill (later the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015), and the creation of the BSL National Plan 2017-2023, noting those responses that related directly to interpreters and interpreting. In addition, semi-structured interviews were with seven representatives from the following BSL organisations within Scotland:

- British Deaf Association (BDA)
- Deaf Action
- deafscotland
- Deafblind Scotland
- Deaf Links

Brief details about the **British Deaf Association** and **Deaf Action** can be found in Section 1.2.3 of this report.

deafscotland

Deafscotland, formerly the Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD), is based in Glasgow. It is an umbrella organisation with members primarily coming from professional organisations, the public sector and deaf organisations. It is a registered charity and has formed part of the BSL Partnership supporting the Scottish Government with implementation of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

Deafblind Scotland

Deafblind Scotland is a registered charity based in Lenzie. It delivers a range of services to deafblind people across Scotland in addition to campaigning for greater recognition and provision for this community. The organisation is also part of the BSL Partnership supporting the Scottish Government with implementation of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

Deaf Links

Deaf Links operates from the Tayside Deaf Hub in Dundee. It is a registered charity established to deliver a range of services to the local deaf community and also to provide BSL classes.

Themes from the data

The following sections report the data are reported under the four very broad and interlinking themes of:

- availability
- standards and professionalism
- clarity and consistency

Respondents additionally provided ideas of how some of the current challenges could be resolved. These are discussed in a further section on possible solutions.

2.1.1 Availability

The general perception from the BSL community is that there is a shortage of registered interpreters in Scotland, that the number of interpreting students is low and that demand for interpreters is growing and could be significantly higher in future.

Data suggest there is a shortage of interpreters who are skilled at working with tactile forms of BSL. The experiences of the deafblind community indicate that only a minority of interpreters engage in hands-on work.

One challenge noted with the availability of interpreters relates to appointments that typically happen outside of normal working hours, such as is frequently the case for emergency health appointments, social work and police interviews.

A more nuanced view from some respondents is that there is a shortage of highly skilled interpreters in Scotland, or skilled interpreters who are available for particular types of work. Data appear contradictory here, with some people claiming that there is a lack of interpreters prepared to engage in ad hoc community work as they prefer the stability of income associated with regular Access to Work (AtW) bookings. This is perceived as detracting from the access to interpreting provision for ad hoc community work (such as health and social work appointments). The alternative view concerns the shortage of interpreters capable of working with deaf professionals in higher profile situations. However, both cases argue for the need for interpreters to maintain breadth in their work to ensure they maintain their skills for working with the diverse BSL community. The perception is that working in one context may contribute to a de-skilling of interpreting professionals.

There is a national shortage of interpreters in Scotland is a phrase often uttered. It does appear to be true, but I also think it is true to say there is a shortage of highly skilled interpreters. I do not think when I try and book interpreters that there are none available, I think there are none available who are willing to undertake the work because they do not feel experienced enough in specific domains. (Philip Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Deaf Action)

Responses indicate that job interviews are a particularly problematic area for finding interpreters. Partly because of lack of knowledge over who is responsible for paying the interpreter (AtW can cover but it is the interviewee's responsibility to organise it), but also because they tend to be arranged at short notice and the deaf applicant may not have the contacts within the interpreting community to source a suitably skilled interpreter.

The interpreting landscape in Scotland is not designed to provide interpreters at short notice. (Mark McMillan, Employability Advisor, Deaf Action)

The perception is that very few of the registered interpreters in Scotland are available for short notice appointments such as job interviews. Interviewees felt this should be prioritised along with emergency health and justice work.

Geography and choice

Data highlight the inconsistency of interpreter provision across the country. It is noted that access to interpreters is easier for those living in the Central Belt. However, respondents also reported that some interpreters within the Central Belt are unwilling to travel outside of their locality. The most significant challenges are experienced by those living in areas where there are fewer interpreters. This impacts on the choice that deaf people have in the selection of the interpreters they work with.

For the deafblind BSL community the choice is even smaller

I think interpreters should use hands on. I go through Deaf Action and ask for an interpreter who does hands on and they give me a choice of two or three interpreters with those skills. (Deafblind consultation participant)

For some deafblind people the preference is for communication via a Guide/Communicator rather than an interpreter. Data reveal that this is because of the level of trust built up through that relationship. An interpreter, with whom they may not necessarily have the same familiarity or level of trust, may not be able to provide the same kind of relationship.

Interviewees described how lack of choice can also be problematic when trying to match the gender of the interpreter and client. They related how it is often desirable in health appointments and for job interviews, where it can be helpful for inexperienced interviewers for the interpreter's voice to better match that of the deaf applicant. Details like these can be crucial in giving a deaf person the edge over other candidates.

Professional respondents were aware that the way they are portrayed to the hearing community is totally dependent on the interpreters they work with. These deaf professionals generally have more influence and choice over who interprets for them. They recognised that the same is not true for people across the BSL community who lack the same network of contacts within the interpreting profession.

There needs to be more consistency of interpreting provision across the whole deaf community. (Mark McMillan, Employability Advisor, Deaf Action)

However, responses illustrate that even professionals have no choice in who interprets for them at a health appointment and are aware they may be portrayed very differently in those situations as a result.

One respondent suggested that the lack of choice of interpreters has an impact on the expectations of the BSL community and may influence their selection of interpreters inappropriate for work in some contexts. This lack of choice extends to a lack of ethnic diversity within the interpreting profession.

Deployment and employment

Data indicate that there is often a lack of flexibility around arranging appointments for deaf people. Flexibility around dates facilitates arranging appointments that align with interpreter availability. It was recognised that some public bodies do this very well, but others do not, and this lack of consistency is problematic in ensuring effective use of locally based interpreters. It was felt that promoting a flexible approach would be beneficial in many public and private sector domains as it is noted as being an issue particularly but not only within the NHS but as something which additionally impacts on employment work such as job interviews.

The BSL organisations interviewed expressed a view that employment of BSL/English interpreters by public sector bodies is not a successful model and particularly problematic when only one interpreter is employed, as one individual is never able to cover all the work required. They also said that the model can be detrimental to the professional development of the employed interpreter both in terms of the variety of work available to them and the support they are likely to receive from their employer. They thought this approach was detrimental to interpreting standards.

Some respondents mentioned the employment of interpreters by one NHS Board, which has created ongoing tensions relating to interpreting provision in that area. This particular NHS Board has employed a team of interpreters that includes trainee interpreters. Data indicate this has resulted in a significant amount of healthcare interpreting in the area now being undertaken by trainee interpreters, which is often considered inappropriate. Use of the in house team has also created problems with gender matching interpreters and patients at appointments.

Another perspective of employment of interpreters was provided by one interviewee who commented on the high number of freelance interpreters in Scotland. They suggested that greater employment of interpreters, in appropriate organisations, would be beneficial particularly for novice interpreters who can receive support from working within a larger interpreting team. However, they noted that such employment is only viable when underpinned by long-term public sector contracts.

2.1.2 Standards and professionalism

Several of the issues raised by the BSL community relate to the professionalism of interpreters and the standards relating to training and registration processes.

BSL tuition

Many people highlighted the urgent need for expanded and higher quality BSL tuition across Scotland. This is seen as underpinning the quality and growth of the interpreting profession.

If you don't have deaf people trained to teach the language, you will never have enough interpreters. (Alana Harper, Chief Executive Officer, Deaf Links)

Interviewees discussed the need for formalised BSL tutor training to improve the standard of BSL tuition and ultimately to ensure the sustainability of the interpreting profession.

It was noted that one organisation had recently set up a basic introductory course, but this raised a concern about the location of training. Training delivered in the Central Belt is likely to result in an increased number of tutors in the Central Belt, impacting on the geographic spread of tutors, and ultimately of interpreters too.

Training

Participants noted that the quality of interpreters in Scotland is very variable, and that this variation in competence relates both to those training via vocational and academic routes. The view of the BSL community indicates the need to improve the overall standard to ensure a sustainable pool of better skilled and flexibly working interpreters. Interviewees commented on the need for more consistency between the different training routes. Some felt that NVQ trained interpreters have more extensive practical experience but lack the underpinning knowledge and ethical frameworks, while those coming through HWU lack the practical experience. The HWU programme is seen as being mainly theoretical. Respondents perceive there to be a wide variation of the quality of interpreters trained, both between the two routes and within them.

Interviewee comments suggest that it would be beneficial to have greater consistency in the curriculum of both training routes. Participants additionally commented on the need for greater consistency of those involved in delivering the training; some trainers have limited professional experience as interpreters and lack the skills required to teach well. It was noted that interpreter training needs to have the support of the BSL community.

Further comments concerned the fact that NVQ student interpreters are able to work as trainees alongside their training, with concern that the supervision of these trainees was inadequate. Interviewees shared concern that NRCPD recommendations for trainee interpreters do not always appear to be followed, and that the situation for trainees registered with SASLI/SRLPDC lacks clarity and support structure.

Registration

There is a general view that regulation is not as robust as it needs to be. This is particularly the case for trainee interpreters, who are viewed as requiring

tighter supervision and guidance on the work they should, and should not, be undertaking.

People need to have confidence in the registration system. (Philip Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Deaf Action)

Data indicate differing opinions and strong views about who ought to hold the register of interpreters in Scotland. However, there is predominant agreement that a single register of interpreters would be preferable, as this would give greater clarity for the BSL community. One view is that having a Scottish register of BSL/English interpreters is essential with concern over interpreters having to register with an “England-based organisation.” The alternative view focuses more on the purpose of registration rather than the location of the registration body.

If joining a registration body becomes a political statement, then we have lost what is at the heart of what we do. The register is there to protect service providers and deaf and deafblind BSL users, not as a badge of heritage. (Philip Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Deaf Action)

One interviewee commented that the need for a Scottish registration body could not be equated to the need for other national organisations such as Police Scotland due to the very different numbers of professionals involved. As a result, any registration body operating with such a small number of registrants loses out on economies of scale and will lack the breadth of knowledge and expertise that a UK-wide registration body could provide. Even those who would prefer the register to be maintained by SASLI/SRLPDC expressed concerns about the organisation being able to implement the rigour needed for an effective regulation given the relatively small number of interpreters it would be responsible for monitoring. Interviewees considered this unsustainable in the longer term.

Interview data indicate a perception of subjectivity and lack of transparency in the registrant application processes and evaluation of CPD by SASLI/SRLPDC. Some respondents consider NRCPD as more effective in the objectivity and greater transparency in management of their register.

Several comments indicate a concern over quality and standards in relation to SASLI/SRLPDC registration. People within that organisation appear to have responded negatively to the Scottish Government’s use of the word ‘upskill’ in the BSL National Plan 2017-2023. Interviewees felt that this insecurity might stem from a concern within the profession about low standards within Scotland.

There is certainly a consensus, within the interview data, that the quality of current interpreting provision is poor and that registration standards need to be enhanced, which would be of benefit to the interpreting profession and to those they work with.

Data indicate that the BSL community needs to know about standards and how to complain and there is a need for registration bodies to have clear processes for complaints about interpreters that can be easily navigated in BSL. However, data also evidence concern over the potential for blacklisting a deaf individual or organisation that lodges a complaint, making people reluctant to express concerns about interpreter quality.

One interviewee commented that although SASLI has historically hosted a register of interpreting agencies, this was considered of little benefit as it afforded no advantage in competitive tendering processes.

Newly qualified interpreter (NQI) support

Participants' comments highlight that merely increasing the number of interpreters in Scotland is not enough to create a better service. What is also required is a better system for the support of newly qualified interpreters (NQIs) to ensure they are supervised and engage in professional development.

Interviewees expressed a feeling that experienced interpreting practitioners do not offer the support required by NQIs; some are highly selective about which interpreters they work with. Participants agree that experienced interpreters should be encouraged to share their experience through allowing opportunities for students/trainees/NQIs to shadow them in their work, or work alongside them. Some interpreters are very supportive and engage in these practices already, but others do not appear to want to pass on their knowledge and experience to a new generation. The divisiveness perceived within the interpreting profession prevents a supportive ethos. It was felt that providing this support should perhaps be an expectation within the profession.

Several interviewees found the recent PEAS project run by HWU interesting. Their consensus was that the project was unsuccessful. However, there is a shared view that some form of support system, or employment of NQIs would be beneficial. The current situation, whereby most newly registered interpreters work on a freelance basis is considered a challenge to NQI development. Many NQIs will work predominantly solo and lack the benefits of working alongside more experienced practitioners. Without some formal system in place there is the potential for an interpreter to become registered and start working in court immediately. A post-qualification structure, similar to that held by other professions, to guard against this, was considered to be advisable.

Concern was also raised about the mental wellbeing of NQIs given the emotionally draining work in which they might be involved. Having a more formalised system of support might help alleviate the pressures they experience.

Specialist skills

Complacency is considered to be a problem within the interpreting profession. Interviewees expressed a desire for interpreters to be continually refreshing

and extending their skills. Comments indicate that some qualified interpreters lack confidence in their abilities and that others work in situations in which they are clearly inappropriate. Not all interpreters have the self-awareness to make sound decisions on what work to accept and some appear to be motivated predominantly by financial reward. There is agreement that CPD should be more accepted and engaged in by the interpreting profession.

The need for an expanded pool of specialist interpreters working in justice settings was mentioned. Finding interpreters to undertake this type of work has been problematic in recent years as many interpreters are reluctant to take on this work since a court case was overturned because the interpreter, at the request of the sheriff, had interpreted both police interview and court proceedings.

The need for more interpreters undertaking theatre work was mentioned. Interviewees commented that some of those currently working in this context lack the expressiveness required.

The deafblind community highlight the need for further training of interpreters working with tactile BSL, and a lack of funding for this.

Deaf interpreters and translators

Interviewees commented on the lack of deaf interpreters and translators in Scotland and expressed how valuable they could be in situations where communication is problematic. This can particularly apply to situations involving deaf children, and in police interviews. In these cases, having a deaf interpreter work alongside a 'hearing' interpreter can be beneficial. It was felt that there may be a lack of understanding about the potential benefits of a team of deaf and hearing interpreters working together in this way.

The increase in BSL translation work resulting from the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 has led to a very varied quality in the BSL translations produced. One interviewee talked about the "cowboys" involved in both the translation and filming/editing work. There is currently no register of BSL translators, making quality control problematic. Respondents would like to see training for deaf BSL translators made available. It was noted that translation work is very different from interpreting, and BSL translation requires presentation skills in addition to the ability to translate, in order to produce material that flows and is comfortable to watch. It was noted that some interpreters have undertaken this work unsuccessfully. However, being deaf and bilingual were considered to be not the only requisites for production of good translations.

Professionalism

Research data evidence how the trust that BSL community members have with interpreters is largely associated with confidence in interpreters' confidentiality. This in turn is often related to interpreters having clear boundaries between professional and social interactions. Interpreters therefore need to be aware of the potential for sharing information inappropriately during social interactions.

Interviewees relayed a view from the BSL community more generally, that interpreters often fail to maintain confidentiality. However, it is not clear from these data exactly what type of information interpreters are believed to be sharing inappropriately.

Data indicate that some interpreters are “at the beck and call” of the deaf community, and work at all hours of the day and night. This was perceived as being detrimental to the health and wellbeing of those interpreters, and serving to blur the professional boundaries of those involved. Data additionally reveal that some staff will not participate fully in meetings when certain interpreters are present, presumably because of fear that confidentiality will be broken.

While familiarity between interpreters and clients is generally perceived as beneficial, over-familiarity or reliance can be problematic.

Over-familiarity of interpreters and clients can also raise difficulties; the delineation between what is work and what is personal can become blurred. (Philip Gerrard, Chief Executive Officer, Deaf Action)

Another aspect of interpreter behaviour considered unprofessional is selectivity over which interpreter colleagues they will work with. There are reports of many interpreters refusing to work with other individual interpreters. This can make booking multiple interpreters for an event/meeting highly problematic. In general there is a perception that within the interpreting profession there is a lot of criticism of others and a lack of mutual support.

A common complaint about interpreters from the BSL community is that of interpreters not showing up when booked. In some cases this might be an accurate description of what happens. In other situations interviewees appreciated that it could also relate to confusion in the booking process; it may mean that an interpreter was requested rather than booked, or relate to a breakdown in a lengthy booking chain.

2.1.3 Clarity and consistency

The issues around clarity and consistency are really around the lack of these attributes.

A major confusion for the BSL community relates to the different qualification levels associated with the various awarding bodies that accredit BSL qualifications, because the numerical levels from the different frameworks do not align.

Further confusion is generated because of the two interpreter registration bodies with registrants in Scotland. One confusion here relates to the colour of the badges associated with ‘full’ registration and ‘trainee’ status. For example, a purple badge signifies trainee status with NRCPD but full registered status with SASLI/SRLPDC.

There is also confusion around the fees that interpreters charge. One organisation expressed concern about the power that interpreters have to determine their own fees. Others reported a wide variation in the fees that interpreters charge, with some overcharging but others perceived as under-charging. This variation in fees is seen as confusing to the public sector too.

The remaining subsections detail other confusions relating to booking interpreters and Access to Work, the expectations of the BSL community, the lack of consistency around use of online interpreting, and agency provision.

Booking processes

Data show that within the BSL community there is often anxiety over how to book interpreters. People perceive the system as complicated, particularly because it varies from one area to another. This lack of consistency is problematic, with data reinforcing the need for a straightforward, simple and consistent system across the country, with the BSL community aware of how and when to book interpreters.

Greater consistency in interpreting provision is needed across Scotland. There is currently too much confusion around where and how you book interpreters. (Mark McMillan, Employability Advisor, Deaf Action)

The lack of clarity around booking processes is not just an issue for deaf people. One organisation commented that public bodies are often unsure how to find interpreters, with many relying on word of mouth and GDPR impacting on information sharing prior to a booking.

Data indicate that healthcare bookings are problematic because often no one person is responsible for the booking. The 'booking chain' is often lengthy and it is not always clear who has or has not done their bit in the process. There appear to be frequent mistakes with healthcare bookings and often the complaints about interpreters not attending appointments relates to NHS work. Further complications arise if an appointment gets changed, either because of interpreter availability or delays in NHS provision. The challenges here relate to lack of ownership and responsibility for the booking, and to awareness of who should be responsible.

The varied different procurement arrangements are confusing for the BSL community. Examples provided include some hospitals having different provider arrangements in place in normal working hours and at evenings/weekends. If deaf patients are unaware of these arrangements they may be under the impression that interpreters are unavailable at certain times. Transparency and communication of arrangements are therefore critical.

Access to Work (AtW)

Several comments concern AtW, noting the inconsistency in the uptake and use of AtW interpreting. A lot of deaf people do not understand AtW and

therefore do not use it. The systems involved in applying for and maintaining AtW support are seen as inaccessible and problematic for BSL users.

I think the system is flawed because it really only works for those deaf people who have good networks and good knowledge of the system. (Mark McMillan, Employability Advisor, Deaf Action)

Interviewees commented on the variations in the implementation and administration of AtW. Some organisations pay the interpreters and then claim payment back from AtW. In other situations the payment goes direct from AtW to individual interpreters. In organisations with a number of BSL staff there can be several interpreters undertaking AtW interpreting on any given day. Some see this as detracting from interpreters' availability for ad hoc community work. One respondent considered that greater collaboration between staff within a single organisation could result in more effective use of interpreter time, but that there appears to be little such collaboration happening at present.

Respondents consider that for interpreters AtW is positive from a financial perspective because they are able to have some guaranteed regular income for regular work with a client. They know that pay via agencies is typically lower than the rates they can achieve when booked direct by deaf clients via AtW. However, this is seen as potentially leading to a de-skilling of interpreters who may work with AtW clients almost exclusively, and therefore lack the regular engagement with other BSL community members to ensure the breadth of their professional practice.

Within the BSL community there is particular confusion and lack of awareness over who is responsible for providing interpreters at job interviews. AtW covers this, but employers who do not have experience of working with deaf staff are unlikely to be aware of this, and many deaf people are also unaware and do not have the knowledge or skills necessary to navigate the AtW system and arrange interpreters.

Data reinforce the importance of being able to compete in the job market, which is seen as an essential part of the Scottish Government's goal of Scotland becoming the best place for BSL users to work. Respondents would like to see interpreter provision at job interviews considered as a priority along with emergency health and police work. It is felt that currently employment is not considered such a priority.

Responses underline how another important route into employment is through voluntary work, but AtW does not cover interpreting costs for unpaid work. It was appreciated that professional interpreters would be unlikely to undertake such work on a voluntary basis.

Technology

The views of the BSL community indicate that compliments around online interpreting are rare. However, there is concern that these views are not

reflected in official reports. Landscape Review data suggest that most deaf people do not like VRI/VRS. This does not mean that online interpreting is ineffective, but interviewees commented that people do not see much evidence of good practice happening in Scotland.

Participants see this as a real concern, given that some NHS Boards appear to be stopping all face to face interpreting in favour of online provision. These decisions have not been taken in consultation with, or the support of, the BSL community and are generally driven by the need to reduce expenditure. Data indicate that use of technology is likely to impact on a deaf person's confidence if they are unfamiliar with communicating via an interpreter in this format, which can significantly impact on their ability to convey the information they require. Although this often pertains to healthcare situations, the same concerns were related to many other situations, including job interviews.

The Scottish Government has funded one provider, with respondents saying that this provision seems to be the benchmark in Scotland. This means that many BSL community members may lack any idea about what an alternative service could look like. Some have had personal experience of other providers and been impressed, but this experience will not have been shared by most deaf people in Scotland.

It's a bit like eating in a greasy spoon café and having no idea that better quality food is available.

Interviewees considered no online providers to be perfect. For a service to be truly effective it needs to be staffed by excellent interpreters supported by reliable and high quality technology. However, even if these are in place, one of the problems with online provision is that the communication is still two dimensional, there is a loss of human contact and the deaf person never knows which interpreter will be 'present'. Further comments suggest that where contracts are with providers based in England, there may be additional challenges relating to regional dialect.

Agencies

Data indicate that the quality of interpreting provision supplied by Scotland-based agencies is varied. One criticism levied at agencies is that they are viewed as being complacent, particularly when they have longstanding contracts with public bodies. Respondents also commented that some agencies do not provide quality interpreters but are nevertheless getting lots of work and securing contracts. This can be problematic when those agencies do not make use of suitably experienced, or local, interpreters. In some cases this occurs because of agency choice, or because some interpreters will not work with certain agencies. However, respondents noted that from a client perspective this causes confusion, and may lead to the perception of lack of 'available' interpreters.

In some areas public bodies are using agencies that are not providing good quality interpreting.

Agencies are seen as having the potential to be proactive in supporting interpreters' development. This is seen as being a particular benefit for the nurturing of newly qualified practitioners. However, this is not widespread practice in Scotland at present. The contract environment determines agencies' employment of interpreters. One interviewee noted that agencies appear to fall into two models; those that have an in house team of interpreters and foster and develop those new to the profession, and those that rely on freelance interpreters. Operation of the latter model may be driven by the lack of regular income provided by contracts with public bodies. The interviewee considered that the current funding mechanisms in Scotland are unsupportive of the first model; therefore not enabling agencies to grow a secure and diverse contract base.

Research participants were concerned that public bodies contracting interpreting services via an agency would be unaware if the interpreters provided were of trainee or registered status. There is a suspicion that some agencies provide trainees for bookings in order to maximise profit.

Expectations

The BSL community has a variety of different expectations around the role of the interpreter. Data indicate that many deaf people don't know how to work with an interpreter and may consider them to be more of a personal assistant. These expectations may lead them to express preference for interpreters who may be inappropriate for the work required. Some respondents felt that the criteria deaf people use to evaluate interpreters may not be appropriate. For example, an interpreter might be excellent in one specialist domain but not in another, although deaf people's knowledge about this might be limited. One interviewee commented that if people have no experience of working with highly skilled interpreters then they will be unable to evaluate the effectiveness of those who are less skilled.

Responses indicate that the deaf community may have very low expectations about the quality of interpreting provision. Concern was expressed that the demand for interpreters was not being maximised, with deaf people not requesting interpreters in situations where they could be provided. Even among deaf professionals the demand for interpreters may not be truly reflected. One respondent said they didn't request interpreters for all their own health appointments if they considered them unimportant, preferring to ensure that interpreters have greater availability for other work.

One respondent commented on expectations around "ownership" of an interpreter working with a deaf person through AtW. Some respondents felt that it is unhelpful when deaf professionals are possessive about the interpreters who work with them.

2.1.4 Summary

Data from the BSL community identify a number of challenges, particularly concerning the effective deployment of interpreters and the need for a more

supportive framework for the interpreting profession. Many of the issues raised are underpinned by the exercise of power and control and point towards the need for greater transparency and collaboration to ensure effective interpreting provision at the highest standard.

One of the key challenges identified is the need to mitigate the current postcode lottery regarding interpreter provision and to alleviate the perceived deficit of interpreters available for ad hoc community work and bookings made with short notice.

While data indicate a need to increase the number of interpreters across Scotland, there are also indications of ways of maximising the capacity of the existing interpreting workforce, which might involve a slightly different balance between employment and self-employment. However, responses indicate that employment by public sector organisations can be problematic, and that any system for employment needs to contribute to a more secure framework for interpreter career progression. Effective deployment of interpreters may be further inhibited by the contractual arrangements for interpreting provision.

The sustainability of the interpreting profession is also perceived as a challenge, with particular concerns around consistency in initial interpreter education programmes and the availability of suitably skilled BSL tutors.

Responses to the Landscape Review reinforce the need for the BSL community to be involved in action towards improving interpreter provision in Scotland in order to ensure that the ultimate goal of improving the lives of deaf people is kept in focus.

2.2 Public Bodies

An online survey for public bodies was launched in April 2019. Some public bodies submitted multiple responses, from different departments, but in total views from 48 different public bodies were received.

These 48 responses include 42 from bodies representing the following sectors:

Justice	3 responses
Health	9 responses (5 health boards plus 4 HSCP)
Education	13 responses (5 FE/8 HE)
Local Authorities	17 responses

Survey responses were supplemented with further educational data generated via an email sent out to all further and higher education establishments in Scotland. This resulted in an additional eight Further Education and eight Higher Education establishments providing useful data for analysis. This increases the total reach of the research to 64 public bodies.

In addition, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were sent out to all local authorities, asking for details of their annual spend on BSL interpreting and translation. Twenty-eight of the 32 authorities responded to these requests.

Responses represent all sectors and include bodies with a nationwide remit as well as those with local responsibilities. The responses cover a wide range of urban and rural geographic areas. The number of respondents represents 60% of the number of the 'listed' authorities in the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015, so the data reported here must therefore be viewed through this lens.

Themes from the data

The following sections report on general issues concerning the engagement of interpreters, before focusing on the common concerns of public bodies and the data that relate to these concerns.

2.2.1 Engaging Interpreters

Demand for interpreters

Over half the respondents indicated that demand for BSL interpretation has increased on previous years, with most Local Authorities reporting increased demand, year on year. Some public bodies made a direct connection between this increased demand and the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. They anticipate this increased demand continuing. However many local authorities did not know the level of demand and very few were able to provide statistics for 2017. The nature of interpreting provision by different local authorities also varied. One reported only 18 appointments in 2017 but

these were supplemented by a drop in service. Figures provided by some included 104 and 120 appointments by two Local Authorities. Although the general view is that demand is increasing, the statistics provided by one NHS Board indicate the opposite trend (2014/15 722, 2015/16 644, 2016/17 577). However, this may now have been reversed by the impact of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

Booking interpreters

The survey asked how interpreters are booked; via agencies, direct with interpreters, or through the use of in-house staff interpreters. The structure of this question resulted in a lack of clarity around employment of interpreters and the use of zero hours contracts. However, data make it clear that the majority of public bodies book interpreters via agencies (83%) and/or book direct with interpreters (50%). Agencies used include third sector specialist BSL agencies, Local Authority-based specialist agencies, corporate specialist BSL agencies and, the larger corporate non-specialist agencies.

Responses indicate that one specialist BSL agency is used extensively across Scotland.

Data suggest that not all authorities are clear about whether the agencies they contract for interpreter provision then subcontract work to other agencies.

Twelve organisations expressed a desire to employ their own interpreters.

Interpreter costs

One issue that relates to the effective use of the interpreting workforce is use of locally-based interpreters. Only 14% of survey respondents indicated that they only work with local interpreters. For some public bodies this is impossible because there are no interpreters living in their area (for example, Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, Western Isles) and in others there are very few (for example, Moray, Aberdeenshire, Highland and the South West). This in turn relates to higher travel expenditure, with 41% indicating that they always or regularly incur significant travel costs because the interpreters they book have to travel from other regions. Only 13% report rarely or never incurring such expenditure. Data evidence that the majority of public bodies (88%) are responsible for covering interpreters' travel costs. Despite having exclusive contracts with one agency, both Dumfries and Galloway and Inverclyde reported always incurring significant travel costs. Other national authorities, like Police Scotland, also reported regularly incurring significant travel costs.

Some respondents considered signed language interpreters to be significantly more expensive than spoken language interpreters, particularly when factoring in cancellation charges. Comments indicate that the cost of BSL interpreters may be a real barrier to making services accessible, particularly for third sector and community groups who lack funding.

Respondents expressed a concern around the additional cost involved in booking interpreters via agencies and the travel costs incurred.

Online interpreting

For the public sector, online interpreting is considered a means of reducing interpreting costs and addressing concerns about interpreter availability. Respondents expressed a desire for there to be more willingness within the BSL community to use online services. However, they also reported that broadband quality impacts on the use, or potential use, of VRS/VRI, noting that the areas of the country most poorly covered by interpreters at present are often those with the poorest broadband provision.

2.2.2 Common Concerns

The most frequently articulated concerns by public bodies relate to:

- lack of availability of interpreters
- booking interpreters being overly time-consuming
- concerns around quality and professionalism.

These three issues are explored in more detail below.

Lack of availability

Thirty-five public bodies responding to the survey expressed problems with lack of interpreters' availability. These concerns were more acute when related to:

- work during evenings and weekends
- specialist work (eg deafblind, justice and higher education)
- certain geographic areas (notably Highland, Inverclyde, Dumfries and Galloway, Moray and Aberdeenshire, Borders, Western Isles, Ayrshire and Arran)
- short-notice bookings

This lack of availability impacts on the way bookings are made, with respondents relating the need to book interpreters several weeks in advance. This is highly problematic for some public bodies where the nature of their work means that short notice bookings are more common or where continuity of interpreter provision is key (eg higher education).

Problems additionally occur when organisations are organising meetings involving a large number of participants and need to book multiple interpreters.

The survey asked the public bodies for suggestions on how provision of interpreters could be improved. There were 48 responses to the question asking for ways of making booking interpreters easier. The main responses, in order of predominance are:

1. To increase the availability of interpreters, making this more consistent nationwide.

2. Creation of a central booking system.
3. Improved staff awareness and intra-organisational consistency in booking systems and processes.
4. Interpreters having the appropriate training and experience for work in specialisms such as legal, medical and higher education work.
5. Greater consistency in relation to interpreter fees and terms and conditions.

Time-consuming booking processes

Forty-four percent of the survey respondents consider booking interpreters to be overly time-consuming. These responses indicate some inconsistency in the views of different authorities booking through the same agency.

Awareness of service user preferences was highlighted as one issue that needs to be factored in when arranging appointments, adding further complexity to the process.

One respondent commented:

Important to note that the booking process for interpreters is very cumbersome. Current process not easy and can put people off booking. If you don't find an interpreter through the first process it all has to be repeated.

Respondents indicated that the following arrangements would make booking interpreters easier for them:

- greater capacity (increased number of interpreters)
- online diary type booking system
- improved staff awareness about how to book interpreters
- greater use of online interpreting to reduce travel costs

Quality and professionalism

Comments around interpreters' professionalism were common across all public sectors. These comments derive from complaints made to the bodies by service users. The most common issues relate to:

- interpreters not attending appointments or cancelling at the last minute
- interpreters arriving late

Three local authorities received complaints about inaccurate interpretations.

Two organisations mentioned occasions when specific interpreters had refused to work with other individuals, and to disagreements between public bodies and locally based interpreters.

A further situation was highlighted, where the NHS Board and Local Authority provided different perspectives. One organisation has employed its own BSL interpreting staff, but the other organisation related complaints from service users about the service now offered. These complaints concern the increased

use of trainee interpreters and the use of interpreters who are not gender-matched to the BSL user for sensitive appointments.

These negative experiences are balanced by many who have not received any complaints. Positive feedback is noted as rare, as most people do not pass comment on services that are satisfactory, but respondents mentioned that service users have expressed satisfaction when continuity of interpreter provision has been provided. This feedback ties in with expression of the following preferences:

- a preference for interpreter continuity, to help build up trust that confidentiality will be maintained
- a preference for locally based interpreters
- individuals expressing a preference for specific interpreters

One NHS respondent advised that there needs to be a very clear statement from the NHS on the use of trainee or newly qualified interpreters within the NHS, and suggested the potential for a competency test or a national training programme for all NQIs.

2.2.3 Sector-Specific Issues

In addition to the common concerns detailed above, there are some issues that are sector specific. These, together with other sector-specific considerations relating to the three common concerns are outlined here.

Health

In addition to the general concerns regarding interpreter availability, responses from health boards indicate that the most difficult day to get interpreters is on Mondays, when GP practices are typically very busy. Availability for out of hours work, especially at weekends, is a significant problem in the health sector.

One issue that emerges from the data is that record keeping about BSL/English interpreter provision within the health sector may be problematic. Bookings for signed language are often combined with spoken language bookings, and detailed statistics around BSL are therefore unavailable. Organisations that employ their own BSL interpreters may now have improved tracking mechanisms for this and be able to report on provision more accurately.

The time-consuming nature of booking interpreters is a factor in the health service. It should be noted that even NHS Boards who contract staff direct rated booking interpreters as a very time-consuming process. For one NHS Board, this is recognised through their employment of a staff member dedicated to dealing with interpreter bookings.

Education

There are some concerns that are perhaps more pertinent within the education sector.

As most further and higher education takes place in normal working hours, the issues of out-of-hours interpreting does not appear to have a significant impact here. However, geographical issues are problematic. For some areas such as Dumfries and Galloway and the Western Isles, sourcing an interpreter at any time on any day of the week would be highly problematic. Neither of those areas currently has any BSL students undertaking study but they also have no locally based interpreters, and there is clearly anxiety about what would happen should there be BSL students in future. This is a real concern given that eight of the survey respondents indicated an increased demand for BSL/English interpreting provision over the last few years. Data indicate that at least three FE and five HE institutions were supporting BSL students (in February 2019). These are spread across the Central Belt and Tayside. Geographically there are significant barriers to interpreting provision for students in the south and north of Scotland.

Some institutions reported using underqualified and/or un-registered interpreters and noted that this can cause tension with local interpreting professionals. However, data indicate that this more typically occurs in areas where there are few, or no, registered interpreters. None of the institutions who responded to the survey or the emailed questions currently employs BSL/English interpreters to work with students.

Several institutions commented about interpreters' lack of knowledge of specialist subject areas, and shared a concern that newly qualified interpreters may not have the competence to work at this level. There was also concern at the lack of interpreters trained at university level; it was recognised that not all interpreters could cope with degree level work and that some interpreters do not have any experience of university study themselves. Institutions would benefit from clear information about which interpreters are able to work in their geographic area, and the skill set of those interpreters, so that they can make better informed judgements about which interpreters would be most suitable in an FE/HE context. It was also recognised that not all BSL students are very experienced at working with interpreters.

There is recognition of the intensity of the support that needs to be provided to BSL students and an appreciation that finding the number of interpreters required can be problematic or would be problematic if student numbers increased. The intensity of support is partly related to interpreter continuity. Interpreter continuity was highlighted as of importance within education, especially Higher Education. Arranging for the same interpreters for an entire programme, or academic year, can prove problematic when there is a lack of availability and when there are last minute timetable changes. Data indicate that the need to book interpreters well in advance can therefore be problematic.

One problem, particular to the education sector, is the challenge of arranging interpreters for work placements. Work placements comprise important elements of many programmes, including teacher training. Respondents

indicated that they had had trouble in finding interpreters for these placements as they may involve additional time commitment but benefit from continuity of interpreter provision.

Concern around interpreter availability is also related to concern around the finances of interpreter provision. Respondents indicate a wide variation in interpreter and agency fees and terms and conditions. It is noted that booking interpreters via agencies adds to the cost but does not necessarily add any value to the procurement or delivery of provision. Comments indicate that greater standardisation of interpreter fees and their terms and conditions (particularly around cancellation charges) would be appreciated.

Data indicate that one of the challenges within educational establishments is the fact that very few institutions have a regular yearly intake of BSL students. This results in staff unable to accrue knowledge about BSL and how best to support students, no systems in place for booking interpreters, and no guarantee of regular work for local interpreters. One respondent commented about the need to 'start from scratch' every time a BSL student registered. The time-consuming nature of arranging interpreters is an issue within education, with respondents commenting on the amount of time this took up for disability advisors and the additional pressure this creates on their workload.

In general, it seems to be easier for educational establishments to be able to elicit feedback on interpreting from students than it is for some other service providers to get feedback from their service users. This reflects the different relationship educational establishments have with students, and routine provision of interpreters rather than in emergency situations, which is the norm in some other sectors.

Justice

The justice sector organisations are impacted not only by the inconsistent geographic spread of interpreters but also by the number of interpreters who wish to engage in legal work. Respondents report a relatively small pool of interpreters who work regularly in justice settings. Bodies with national remits are particularly challenged by interpreter availability, as are those that frequently need to source interpreters out of hours, or in situations where multiple interpreters are required.

The statutory timescales to which these bodies have to adhere present further challenge when the number of interpreters available who engage in this sector is so restricted.

In addition, respondents noted a wide variation in the interpreter fees charged by different agencies.

Local authorities

Being able to report accurate figures for BSL/English interpreting provision is also problematic for local authorities. These difficulties were reinforced by responses to the FOI requests on expenditure. Some were unable to give

any figures; others reported figures that were combined with all language interpreting expenditure. Some of the FOI responses suggest poor internal communication about which agencies are used. In organisations that have multiple departments, data may be held within those departments and no overall figure is available.

One local authority detailed how they are obliged to follow prescribed internal procurement systems, which makes the contracting of BSL/English problematic.

Other organisations

Data suggest that most organisations do not know of interpreters who specialise in their field of work. The lack of centrally held information about interpreters may be especially problematic for national bodies that deal with highly technical subject matter. Respondents reported having difficulty in finding interpreters with the specialist skills and knowledge to function in these domains.

Responses from these organisations indicate a widespread problem in scheduling events where multiple interpreters are required.

2.2.4 Summary

Interpreter availability is a concern for most public bodies. In some geographic areas, there are no interpreters at all, and this creates a significant problem for those endeavouring to ensure that public services are accessible to the BSL community. This is especially problematic when continuity of interpreter provision is desirable. For other public bodies, the problem may relate more to the lack of interpreters who have the requisite specialist knowledge to engage in their work. These data indicate the need for continuing professional development for interpreters to enable them to engage in a wider range of more complex work.

The lack of availability of interpreters is likely to exacerbate the challenge of processing interpreter bookings. There is a consensus that the administration required for this is overly time-consuming. Many bodies contract with agencies to assist with this process, resulting in them making one phone call rather than several. However, although this provides valuable assistance to the public bodies, the overall value of booking through an agency is questionable, particularly if interpreters who are not well-suited to the booking are supplied.

Data also suggest that effective monitoring of the amount of interpreting provided is problematic because different organisations are collecting different information.

2.3 Interpreter Organisations

Interviews were conducted with representatives from three key British Sign Language interpreter organisations operating in Scotland, namely:

- The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD)
- Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) – now renaming as the Scottish Register of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community (SRLPDC)
- Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI)

The fourth organisation, the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI) responded to the same questions via email.²¹

Brief details about **NRCPD** and **SASLI/SRLPDC** can be found in Section 1.2.4 of this report.

ASLI

ASLI is the largest UK-wide membership association for BSL/English interpreters with 722 members and is affiliated on an international basis with EFSLI and WASLI. On 1st August 2019 ASLI had 42 members based in Scotland. Scottish membership of the Association has been growing steadily over the last 15 years. Following a resolution at the AGM in 2017, the Association has taken a firm stance on the self-regulation of interpreters and has therefore been keen to see the separation of registration from membership and awarding body functions within SASLI in Scotland. ASLI is funded entirely by membership subscriptions.

NUBSLI

NUBSLI is a branch of Unite the union and was established in 2014. It serves to represent BSL/English interpreters in all areas of the UK. On 1st August 2019 their membership stood at 525 across the UK, with 36 based in Scotland. Much of their remit concerns the sustainability of the profession, through protecting the working conditions and income of interpreters. The work of NUBSLI is funded by membership fees together with the infrastructure and support provided by Unite.

Themes from the data

Responses from these four stakeholders highlight some key themes for the interpreting profession. It is important to acknowledge that most of these themes are not exclusive to interpreters working in Scotland, a point made explicitly by both NUBSLI and NRCPD. Many challenges are pertinent to interpreters across the United Kingdom and, in some cases, to those working in other countries. However, the challenge of rurality may have particular

²¹ NUBSLI's response to the Landscape Review is available to view at their website <https://nubsl.com>

pertinence in Scotland, together with its associated effect on supply, choice and quality.

Responses from these four organisations fall into three broad categories:

- issues relating to standards and the quality of interpreting
- concerns about the procurement of interpreters and models of employment
- provision of online interpreting

2.3.1 Quality

Several of the themes emerging from the interviews relate to quality and standards issues. NRCPD highlighted two general issues that impact on quality and standards. The first is that supply and demand has a direct relationship to quality of provision. Where there is a deficit of interpreters this suppresses standards. Secondly, that reduced pay is a disincentive for keeping experienced practitioners within the profession, with downward pressure on pay therefore also having a negative impact on standards. It should be emphasised that the subheadings below are not mutually exclusive. All these issues are interconnected and many overlap.

BSL tuition

Responses reflect the symbiotic relationship that exists between interpreters and the BSL community. SASLI/SRLPDC expressed concern at the lack of BSL tutors who are able to teach to the advanced levels required for the training of interpreters. However, it was also noted that even Level 1 classes would benefit from tutors who understand about the linguistic structure of BSL and also how this compares with the structures used within English in order to teach more effectively and ensure that students adopt good “habits” from an early stage in their learning.

It is impossible to have good interpreters if we don't have good BSL tutors. (SASLI/SRLPDC)

Respondents commented on the two iterations of the Training of the Trainers (ToTs) programme run by Heriot-Watt University.²² Data indicate that perceived problems with this programme were twofold. First, that the programme was pitched at the wrong level and would have been more effective if basic tutor training had been provided prior to delivering a programme at this more advanced level. Second, that there was a lack of the follow-up support, and opportunities, necessary for the BSL tutors who graduated from the course.

SASLI/SRLPDC is now trying to address this through involvement with the Professional Development Award run by Deaf Services Lanarkshire.

²² This programme was run twice, with graduates completing in 2008 and 2011. Both cohorts were funded by the Scottish Government.

Training

Interviewees commented on the various one-off schemes that have been run in Scotland, designed to boost interpreter training or supplement it.

The Apprenticeship Scheme run by SASLI between 2009 and 2011 was funded by the Scottish Government as part of the Building Bridges project.²³ This was a one-off training provision that was not sustained, resulting in the registration of nine interpreters.

Promoting Equal Access to Services (PEAS) was another Scottish Government funded project run by Heriot-Watt University in 2018/19. This was viewed by interviewees as another “sticking plaster” that did not address the real issues for graduate interpreters, or interpreter training more generally. Some respondents considered this as evidence of the lack of joined-up thinking and planning in relation to developing the interpreting profession in Scotland.

In respect of initial interpreter training more generally, NUBSLI members have expressed concern that NQIs are unprepared for entry to the profession.

Achieving the standard to pass the qualification, and to qualify for registration, is not enough for NQIs to be competent in some quite unpredictable situations. (NRCPD)

NUBSLI comment that interpreters are predominantly self-employed but NQIs lack the knowledge necessary to establish themselves as freelance interpreters. However, concern about the quality of training is more widespread. Training programmes towards registration are mapped by NRCPD against the National Occupational Standards for Interpreting (NOS)²⁴. This process ensures that the qualification is specified at the correct level, but is not a guarantee of quality of delivery of the programme to which that qualification relates. This is a UK-wide issue, and NRCPD acknowledge that monitoring of training delivery is a challenge, but one with which registration bodies need to engage.

Registration standards

The two registration bodies with registrants in Scotland are NRCPD and SASLI/SRLPDC. Until April 2019 SASLI had a triple function as both a registration body, membership association and awarding body. ASLI members voted in 2017 overwhelmingly against self-regulation of the profession in order to ensure transparency and independence of regulation.

²³ The Building Bridges project was a Scottish Government funded project run by SASLI and worth £1,331,197. Outputs included the training of nine interpreters via the SASLI Apprenticeship Scheme, the training of eight BSL tutors via the ToTs 2 programme at Heriot Watt University and the groundwork for establishing the MA (Hons) British Sign Language (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies) at Heriot Watt University that subsequently began in 2012.

²⁴ <https://www.instructus-skills.org/apprenticeships-qualifications-nos/nos-index/nos-languages-intercultural-working/>

Registration with NRCPD is based on applicants successfully completing one of a list of approved qualifications mapped against the NOS. Since the revision of the NOS in 2017, NRCPD has been working with other awarding bodies to ensure that all interpreting qualifications meet the new NOS. It is also revising the complaints process and updating the website so that interpreters' areas of expertise and skill can be identified more easily.

Like the NRCPD, SASLI/SRLPDC has a list of approved courses on completion of which applicants can apply to join the register. However, in contrast to NRCPD, SASLI/SRLPDC conducts an additional 'skills check' which then forms the basis of their decision to admit the applicant to the register or offer them trainee interpreter status. Despite this, several organisations still expressed a concern about the quality of interpreting provided by SASLI registrants.

There is too much professional arrogance within the profession and too many interpreters who need to develop within their work. (SASLI/SRLPDC)

SASLI/SRLPDC indicates the desire to retain a skills check prior to admission, but acknowledge that the existing system is flawed. However, the difference in admissions procedures creates a tension when determining parity between the two registration bodies. NRCPD highlighted the importance of maintaining equivalent standards for registration with both NRCPD and SASLI/SRLPDC; this is perhaps the only concern that is unique to Scotland. Interviewee comments suggest that a lack of parity between the two registration bodies is likely to result in a negative impact on standards, which may become more apparent over time.

Dealing with poor and unsafe practice remains a challenge for registration bodies, requiring complaints processes that work effectively for deaf and hearing individuals/organisations.

One means of maintaining the standard of interpreting work in the public sector is through mandating the use of registered interpreters. This is problematic in settings where governance is fragmented as is the case within the NHS and in the regional police service structure in England. Although NRCPD consider that this might be less problematic in Scotland, other respondents evidence the variability in policy and decision-making across the health sector. This variance includes the use of trainee interpreters and online provision.

Interviewees expressed concern that because SASLI/SRLPDC is a registration body with relatively few registrants, this did not represent a sustainable business model and might challenge the effectiveness of interpreting regulation.

Ongoing development

All respondents recognise the need for continuing professional development (CPD) post initial registration. Interpreters' developmental needs will change

though, as their career progresses. NRCPD raised the issue of the importance of structured CPD that reflects the entire career of an interpreter, with more experienced interpreters currently limited by what is on offer.

Another issue across the UK is the absence of formal training in specialist areas. (NRCPD)

However, the initial years as NQI create the foundation for future development.

In any profession, the first three years are formative in terms of the speed and direction of development. (NRCPD)

All interviewees expressed an appetite for the creation of a more formal system for the supervision/mentoring of all trainee and novice interpreters. NRCPD currently mandate supervision of regulated trainees, and SASLI/SRLPDC would welcome such a system, together with the formal supervision of NQIs. NUBSLI already has a buddy system for new members. ASLI shared a view that the size of Scotland allows for the opportunity to develop a well-organised supervisory culture.

2.3.2 Employment and procurement

Data from the four organisations frequently relate to issues around the employment and procurement of interpreters. Within this theme there are two interconnected sub-themes: employment and remuneration.

Employment

There is concern around the working conditions of interpreters who are employed as members of staff by public bodies. NUBSLI has received information that often these posts are 'constantly under review', with one Local Authority named as an example, where reduction in the pool of staff interpreters is occurring despite an increasing demand for interpreting services.

NUBSLI recommends that interpreters should only be employed where the organisation's staff have in-depth knowledge of the BSL community and the way BSL/English interpreters work, in order to ensure that staff interpreters are properly supervised and supported. This is particularly important as it is noted that novice interpreters are more likely to seek out employed positions. NQIs require additional support and guidance and should not be pressured into working in situations where it would be inappropriate for them to do so.

The 'in house' interpreting services provided by some public bodies combine the employment of a staff interpreter/s with use of a 'bank' of freelance interpreters on zero hours contracts; a practice that NUBSLI continues to campaign against.

Some countries provide a national interpreting service, whereby interpreters are employed by the state. NUBSLI cautions against adopting a Scandinavian model whereby all interpreters are state employed. Most NUBSLI members

are currently self-employed and would not wish to lose the autonomy this offers, particularly for those who appreciate the flexibility this allows for balancing the demands of family life with their professional practice. ASLI also recognised that interpreters appreciate the independence of self-employment but suggested that there could be a partial move towards Scottish Government employment of interpreters. This would facilitate improved geographical coverage, and promote the sharing of interpreters by neighbouring regions. Additionally, this could be an effective means of supporting novice interpreters, through the provision of a structured employment system that included appropriate deployment and supervision.

Procurement

Interpreting services are frequently contracted via framework agreements. This is a system opposed by NUBSLI, as being an inappropriate method of procuring BSL/English interpreting. Many contracts are awarded to non-specialist interpreting agencies, despite their lack of familiarity with BSL/English as a language pair, without any prior engagement with the BSL/English interpreting profession. This is highly problematic where, as frequently happens, these contracts specify rates and terms and conditions with which BSL/English interpreters will not agree. ASLI supports these concerns and reiterated the need for engagement between service commissioners and the interpreting profession.

What commissioners do not understand is that it makes no sense to ignore what the practitioners are saying, particularly when they are all saying the same thing. (ASLI)

NUBSLI outline how ultimately this means the quality of interpreting provision will fall, that provision under the terms of the contract will fail, and that the BSL community (and public bodies) are placed at risk. The NUBSLI 'Dossier of Disgrace'²⁵ contains many examples of this from England, but this practice has now become widespread in Scotland and the document will be updated with these examples. NUBSLI considers the continued use of framework agreements to present a significant risk to the interpreting profession. These contracts allow agencies/companies to profit at the expense of interpreters, and ultimately at a cost to the end clients.

Procuring interpreting services via framework agreements and contracts with agencies lengthens the supply chain. This is increased further when the contracted agency sub-contracts to other agencies, with companies making a profit at every stage of the procurement process. NUBSLI highlight the benefits of a shorter supply chain, expressing a preference for direct procurement of interpreting services, with benefits that include:

- immediate confirmation of interpreter availability
- removal of third-party costs
- interpreters' fees and business terms are respected

²⁵ <https://nubsli.com/resources/national-frameworks-dossier-of-disgrace/>

- trusted working relationships are established
- improved continuity for clients
- safer working practices for interpreters

NUBSLI reported that its members have expressed concern about agencies in general. They reported that it is rare for agencies to consult with local interpreters prior to tendering for a contract, although a difference is noted in the approaches taken by agencies that are run by charitable organisations in contrast to those operated as private enterprises. Two deaf charities, Deaf Action in Edinburgh and Deaf Links in Dundee, were identified as positive examples where consultation has happened. Members would like to see this practice extended. In contrast, members had very negative experiences with non-specialist agencies, and the specialist agencies that are run as a private enterprise. The lack of engagement with local interpreters is detrimental given that successful delivery of the contracts relies on the use of local interpreters. Participants shared further concern about the integrity of the award of some contracts, with an example given of an agency director working as an interpreter at meetings at which contracts were discussed.

Where agencies are used, NUBSLI recommend that these should only be specialist agencies that focus on delivery of BSL/English interpreting services. These agencies should additionally be those that engage with the interpreting workforce through consultation and respect the terms and conditions of individual interpreters.

Remuneration

NUBSLI reports that agencies in Scotland regularly dictate the fees they will pay freelance interpreters. This practice includes specialist and non-specialist agencies (full details are provided in NUBSLI's contribution to the Landscape Review²⁶). The rates paid are frequently lower than the general guidance issued by NUBSLI <https://nubsli.com/guidance/interpreter-fees/>. NRCPD also commented on the need for fees to be more reflective of the domains of work involved and suggest ensuring pay levels keep pace with inflation.

There are different perspectives on fee rates, which indicate a tension between the autonomy of the self-employed practitioners and the organisations who engage their services. Any attempt to create a framework and tariff for public sector work would require careful consideration and consultation in order to incorporate appropriate terms and conditions for interpreters. NUBSLI's position is that freelance interpreters should be free to charge fees commensurate with their skills and experience and are reflective of the skills needed for the domains in which they work. NUBSLI also advocate that interpreters do not charge by the hour, or on the basis of a two-hour minimum. For the sustainability of individual professionals, and the profession as a whole, it is essential that fees:

²⁶ <https://nubsli.com/nub-posts/landscape-review-of-bsl-english-interpreting-in-scotland/>

... take into account the preparation undertaken prior to an event or the need for them to manage their workloads in such a way that they ensure they are mentally and physically prepared to provide quality services when contracted to do so. (NUBSLI)

As a result of the need for fair pay for the work involved, NUBSLI recommend that interpreters charge by half or full day rates only in order to maintain a transparent fee structure that reflects the effort involved. An alternative view on remuneration is that some interpreters enter the profession as a “commercial enterprise” which SASLI/SRLPDC perceives to be an unwelcome but emerging culture in Scotland.

2.3.3 Online interpreting

Data indicate that online interpreting and use of technology more generally, is seen as having a place in the interpreting landscape. However, it is also recognised that there needs to be a better understanding of the impact of using remote technology for BSL/English interpreting on other issues such as pay and accessibility. Respondents considered that many interpreters have anxieties around online interpreting but that the needs and wishes of the BSL community should be the guiding factor around development of these services.

The introduction and management of online interpreting services therefore need to be very carefully considered. Respondents’ comments indicate that this has not been the case to date. Deaf people need to be instructed on how to use the technology before they can engage with it effectively. Given that many situations in which it is likely to be used might be times of crisis, it is critical that the BSL community are familiar and comfortable with using the technology in advance. While good use of technology could increase the assertiveness and confidence of the BSL community, it needs to be used at their discretion, rather than at the dictate of service providers.

Both NUBSLI and ASLI indicate that there are some problems with online provision to date which relate to who is providing the service, with some providers perceived as being unpopular with the BSL community. ASLI has requested an independent review of both the way the contactSCOTLAND-BSL contract was awarded and the service it delivers.

2.3.4 Summary

Data from interpreting organisations indicate several challenges and risks faced by the profession at the moment.

These include a recognised need to uphold and improve quality from interpreter training through to professional practice. The BSL/English interpreting profession currently lacks any clear career structure. There appears to be a growing appetite for the creation of a career structure for the

profession, although this will remain a challenge for a profession whose members are largely self-employed. However, the time may now be right to create a more defined career structure that outlines the supervision and support required for those new to the profession, while simultaneously recognising the support that needs to be provided by more experienced practitioners.

There is a real challenge in ensuring that procurement of interpreters, whether face to face or online, does not detract from quality of provision, and that whatever systems are in place make best use of existing interpreters. A system whereby the supply chain can be significantly shortened, and where interpreters can be engaged directly by public bodies might be preferable. Where contracts exist, there is a need for those commissioning contracts and delivering those contracts to engage with the interpreting profession and ensure those contracts include provision of the support required to sustain the profession. There is a tension between remuneration and quality of work, but good quality interpreting needs to be valued appropriately, particularly where specialist skills and experience are involved.

These changes can only be achieved through approaches that focus on sustainability and collaboration. Strategic decision-making around BSL/English interpreting provision needs to focus on getting the best value for money from any future funding, where investment is translated into action rather than organisational profit. Equally important is a focus on the long-term, rather than quick fixes, ensuring that the work done will deliver an ongoing benefit to the interpreting profession, and ultimately the BSL community. This can be done through development of a more holistic strategy, ensuring that funded projects are interconnected and through fostering a more collaborative approach that is supported by all interpreting organisations.

2.4 Interpreter Training Providers

Interviews were conducted with the four BSL/English initial training providers based in Scotland, namely:

- *BSL Scotland*
- *Deaf Perspective*
- *Deaf Services Lanarkshire*
- *Heriot-Watt University*

Details of these training providers are given in Section 1.2 of this report. The data reported here relate to the training provision of these four organisations, together with the interviewees' thoughts on the interpreting profession and landscape in general. Some additional information has been incorporated to reflect the experience of delivering the MSc British Sign Language/English Interpreting (post-registration) programme at Queen Margaret University.

It should be noted that, following the introduction of the new National Occupational Standards in Interpreting (NOS) in December 2017, the NRCPD are currently undertaking a re-validation/mapping of all the relevant qualifications that lead to registration. This process should be completed by the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year.

Themes from the data

The responses are grouped together under three very broad headings:

- delivery
- quality and standards
- collaboration

These headings reveal a number of themes and common concerns, together with suggestions for next steps and plans for a sustainable future.

2.4.1 Delivery

Several themes from interviewees' discussions related to the delivery of training. These include how students are recruited to the programmes, how students are prepared for entering the profession, along with staffing and funding concerns. The following sections contain information about the programmes that was shared during the interviews.

Intake arrangements

Both NVQ Level 6 Diploma centres have application processes that involve skills testing their candidates in addition to other qualification requirements. The centres select candidates that are judged to have the potential to become interpreters. BSL Scotland encourages their students to register as regulated trainees with NRCPD, which means they must have an NRCPD Registered Supervisor, but reported that finding appropriate supervisors was problematic. The NVQ route and the SASLI Customised Award frequently attract mature

students, and those with family commitments. These students are self-funding, but some receive small grants from the Glasgow Society for the Education of the Deaf.

Recruitment to the undergraduate programme at Heriot-Watt was acknowledged to be a challenge. The University's recruitment process has meant that the BSL team has not had direct input into the selection of students to date. From 2018 onwards this selection process has changed to enable a more nuanced selection of suitable candidates. Starting in 2019, there is now an alternative exit route for students who do not have the right skills to become interpreters. This alternative route (a degree in Applied Language studies, BALS) could make a useful route for deaf people who want to train as translators. However, at present the University is unable to recruit students directly to that qualification. The 12 SFC funded places available annually to Scotland and EU applicants will remain only for places on the interpreting programme.

Facilitating practical experience

Students on the NVQ programmes at BSL Scotland and Deaf Perspective are encouraged to become NRCPD regulated trainee interpreters. Those on the SASLI Customised Award programme with Deaf Services Lanarkshire are able to become trainee interpreters with SASLI/SRLPDC. Like students from the two NVQ centres, this means that they can undertake restricted work as interpreters alongside their training. This is one of the ways of promoting a smooth transfer from student to fully fledged interpreter. Additionally the Learning Log that forms part of the NVQ portfolio prepares students for the CPD process that they need to engage in post-registration. Further effort is put into ensuring that students become embedded within the professional landscape and the BSL community. Both NVQ centres described how they involve members of the BSL community to take part in training activities with their students.

Students on the HWU programme are unable to become trainee interpreters with NRCPD or SASLI/SRLPDC during their studies, and therefore cannot take on paid interpreting work. Practical experience is gained via placements in their third and fourth years of study.

In Year 3 of study all students engage in two 50 day community placements, in lieu of a 'year abroad'. The BSL students are placed within BSL sector organisations across the UK. Staff reported a significant increase in students' confidence when they return from these placements. Experiences are varied, but most embrace the opportunity and the fluency of their BSL improves. Many students contribute significantly more than the 24 weeks of annual academic study expected from the programme.

In Year 4 the students undertake a further 100 hours of observation and shadowing alongside mentors who are practicing interpreters. In the second semester these hours can involve some supervised experience of interpreting if a student's mentor deems it appropriate.

HWU staff report that engaging suitably qualified and experienced mentors to support the students remains a challenge. There are insufficient placement providers in Scotland and a lack of money to support the additional costs students can incur. This becomes particularly problematic when students have to relocate elsewhere in the UK to undertake placements, and not all students are able to be this flexible. The arrangements potentially disadvantage mature students. Knowledge about which placements have proved more successful is now factored in to the yearly planning process. Ideally, arrangements with placement providers would become a permanent feature rather than requiring renegotiation each year.

The more we work with a consistent pool of placements, the more we're seeing this develop as a successful knowledge exchange. (Professor Graham Turner, Heriot-Watt University)

The placement challenges experienced by HWU are mirrored by the experiences of the other providers in relation to the lack of opportunities for their students to observe healthcare appointments. This is particularly important given that NQIs frequently engage in healthcare work.

There are limited opportunities for trainees to develop their skills and knowledge in the healthcare sector. (Deaf Services Lanarkshire)

HWU staff highlighted how practical skills are also developed in a classroom context. This learning environment has been enhanced by use of a cloud-based server called GoReact to help with students' practical skills and provision of feedback into a real-time recording.²⁷ This means that work between BSL and English is not restricted to the on-campus Interpreting Laboratories, as this software allows students to access the necessary material for viewing and recording from any location.

Staffing

All respondents raised issues concerning the challenges of staffing interpreter training programmes in Scotland. Programmes typically operate with very small staff teams.

All providers commented on the challenge of finding appropriately skilled and qualified staff to teach interpreting skills on their programmes. For the NVQ centres there is the additional challenge of identifying qualified Assessors and Internal Verifiers. Interviewees shared a concern about the future of interpreter training.

There is a serious shortage of appropriate and qualified tutors for the interpreting qualification course in Scotland, such as availability of people with appropriate linguistic skills and knowledge of interpreting theories. (Deaf Services Lanarkshire)

²⁷ GoReact facilities can be viewed at <https://get.goreact.com/>

This concern extends to the BSL training that is needed to underpin the interpreter training programmes. It was felt that it would have been useful for the ToTs programmes previously delivered at Heriot-Watt University to have included Assessor training. Interviewees report a need for a greater number of trained BSL tutors and Assessors. One perceived deterrent is that many deaf people would find the idea of attending a generic course with hearing people intimidating.

Interviewees shared a further concern about the ageing population of BSL tutors; many of the BSL tutors around Scotland are approaching retirement age. A positive drive to recruit younger people into the BSL teaching profession was considered beneficial along with further planning to ensure that future provision is maintained and extended. HWU staff recognise that as BSL becomes further embedded in schools as part of the 1+2 languages policy²⁸, the demand for BSL tutors at all levels of tuition will increase. This in turn will generate a need for appropriate training in place to meet this growing demand.

Students who become NRCPD regulated trainees require a Registered Supervisor. One NVQ centre considered that NRCPD could facilitate locating appropriate supervisors more effectively, but appear to be hampered in sharing the necessary information by GDPR.

For HWU, the staffing issues predominantly concern the supervision and monitoring of student placements.

Funding

The NVQ centres reported that funding is a significant barrier to students on the NVQ route. Candidates typically self-fund and there are no substantial grants available to them as Individual Training Accounts are not available for study on the Signature NVQ Level 6 Diploma. BSL Scotland commented that a lot of people who study for NVQ Level 6 BSL would like to progress to interpreter training but cannot afford to do so.

Various interpreter training programmes in Scotland have received Scottish Government funding, either directly or indirectly. These include the MA (Hons) programme at HWU, the apprenticeship training offered by SASLI in conjunction with the University of Leeds, and the SASLI customised award. However, no funding for interpreter training in Scotland has been directed towards NVQ provision.

*It feels like whoever shouts loudest wins, with funding being awarded to the biggest (not necessarily best) organisations.
(Linda Thomson, RSLI and Interpreter Trainer, Deaf Perspective)*

There are additional cost implications for NVQ students, who have to fund the cost of the NRCPD supervisor themselves. In some centres a member of staff

²⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/language-learning-scotland-12-approach/pages/1/>

from the centre takes on the role of NRCPD Supervisor and the cost of this is included within the programme fee. However, issues with appropriate staffing might impact on the potential for this.

In contrast, Scottish and EU students at HWU get free places to study on the MA (Hons) programme. This generates a view that those who benefit from that funding should stay in Scotland, otherwise the cost benefit to the country is lost. However, the figures reported earlier (see Section 2.1) indicate that the majority of HWU students remain working in Scotland.

HWU would like to see additional funding available to enable them to better support the students during their Year 3 placements. They articulated a need for funding to cover mentoring and coordination costs in addition to supporting students' travel and accommodation. It is possible that some funding might be established via internal University mechanisms following on from 'year abroad' changes associated with Brexit.

2.4.2 Quality and standards

Some of the issues discussed under this heading pertain directly to the quality of graduates from the programmes concerned. Other issues relate more generally to the interpreting profession and in particular to the needs of novice interpreters (NQI).

Output standards and registration

Several respondents shared a view that the standards of those trained by different providers vary considerably. This is a view that is levied at both NVQ graduates and those graduating from the Heriot-Watt University programme, with data suggesting that these perceptions may sometimes be based on encounters with a few individuals, and the experience generalised to the training route as a whole. Some respondents are concerned that the standard required for registration is not set high enough, but this is not an issue over which the training providers have any influence.

The view that the academic training at HWU is insufficient to prepare students for the profession is somewhat supported by comments from the staff there. Staff appreciate that the HWU graduates do not emerge as experienced practitioners. One of the HWU team considered the four year full-time programme "just" enough to develop the skills necessary for registration, but that there is a close relationship between output quality and the quality of the students recruited into Year 1. It was admitted that centralised recruitment processes at the University resulted in a lack of involvement by the BSL team. This situation has now changed, so more effective decisions on student recruitment can be facilitated. Over the longer term, as BSL becomes embedded within school education as part of the 1+2 languages policy, applicants will be more likely to have BSL skills before entering the programme, and this will have a significant impact on students' competencies on graduation.

HWU students who graduate with MA (Hons) are able to register with NRCPD. However, HWU staff shared the view that blanket registration for all graduates may be problematic. With the re-mapping of the award following the new NOS, it is possible that the criteria for full registration may be elevated to only those graduating with specific awards (eg possibly a first or a 2.1) and the potential for a year of restricted practice for those with lower grades. This is still being explored. When the course was established, the NRCPD scrutinised the programme details to sign off graduates as reaching the registration threshold. The University requested a similar process with SASLI, but this was not undertaken. However, graduates are able to apply for SASLI/SRLPDC registration, requiring them to undergo that organisation's own skills test. Staff are aware that this results in most applicants becoming SASLI/SRLPDC trainees, but then lacking the support or mechanisms to help them to develop their skills to the desired standard. This has been a negative experience for many graduates and most now choose to register with NRCPD alongside membership of ASLI, which is considered a more supportive framework. All current graduates are advised to be cautious with the work they accept.

The supportive structure of the NRCPD regulation/registration system was commented on positively by other interviewees. In contrast, SASLI/SRLPDC was perceived by one NVQ centre as not providing any follow-up support to those who have trainee status with them. Trainee interpreters need a clear registration structure and pathway and this does not exist within SASLI/SRLPDC. One training provider commented that SASLI had requested to see trainees' NVQ portfolios when applying for full registration. This deterred students from applying to SASLI and many chose to register with NRCPD instead. Data indicate that more training providers are encouraging NRCPD registration for their students.

These issues highlight differences in approaches between the two registration bodies, and also the perceptions of the efficacy of the vocational and academic routes to registration. One centre pointed out that the NVQ has changed over the years and many people might have incorrect negative assumptions about the qualification. Similarly there are negative perceptions around the academic route. Although many people consider HWU graduates to be lacking confidence in their work, there is a general acceptance that the HWU programme produces interpreters who are academically able, and who have knowledge of up-to-date interpreting practices.

Respondents expressed the importance of graduates from all training programmes being able to work together, and meet the expectation of service users.

We're all in favour of an agreed national system of benchmarks and standards, so that everyone knows essentially what they're getting when they hire a 'qualified' interpreter. (Professor Graham Turner, Heriot-Watt University)

Statutory regulation was mentioned as potentially being beneficial in relation to funding. However, the question remains around whether statutory regulation for such a relatively small profession would be practicable.

Support for NQIs

There is one issue on which there is a clear consensus, and this is the increased support required for interpreters new to the profession.

There was more of an employment structure for NQIs two or three decades ago. On completion of training, the NQIs were often employed as interpreters, working within sizeable teams with the support of managers and senior interpreters. Tutors commented on the impact that the lack of this structure currently has on the profession.

Being forced to go freelance isn't ideal. The freelance market is more dominant, and if it is that way then we need to have other support in place. (Tessa Slaughter, Staff Interpreter, Heriot-Watt University)

HWU tutors articulated the need for a clear framework of support for NQIs. Supervision is currently available but is requested on a voluntary basis and not everyone engages with it.

Having a more visible structure, where newly registered interpreters have to have something in place would be good, in the same way that this is a requirement for regulated trainees. (Professor Jemina Napier, Heriot-Watt University)

This concept is also supported by the vocational training providers. Such a scheme would help address concern that some NQIs lack the confidence or may be unsafe to practice alone. One area where support would be particularly valuable would be for work in the healthcare sector.

The ideal would be if graduates (wherever they are from) go and work for an organisation or agency for a probationary period, or are attached to a paid qualified interpreter as their mentor and this person takes on a supervisory role. (Professor Jemina Napier, Heriot-Watt University)

Having such a scheme in place to support NQIs would require more experienced interpreters working in a supervisory or mentoring capacity to undergo some form of training to enable them to do this effectively.

CPD and career structure

The lack of a career structure for interpreters was documented back in the 1990s (Pollitt 1997).²⁹ Although creating such a career structure is not the remit of training providers, interviewees discussed the potential for such a

²⁹ Pollitt, Kyra (1997) The state we're in: some thoughts on professionalism and practice among the UK's sign language interpreters, *Deaf Worlds*, Issue 3, Volume 13.

structure to be created. There are models outside the UK that the Scottish Government and registration bodies might consider.

In Australia, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) has developed a tiered system of registration.³⁰ Interpreters must fulfil prerequisites for the registration category they apply for, and complete a skills test. Revalidation of certification, through evidence of practice and CPD is required every three years.³¹ The system also requires those certified at the lower levels to move up the certification ladder within a specified time-frame. By taking certification testing in-house, NAATI has addressed the inconsistency in quality between various training centres. This might be a way forward in the UK context.

In an ideal world you should have a generic safe to practice registration point, and then some way of certifying for specialism, like the provision at QMU. (Professor Jemina Napier, Heriot-Watt University)

Such a career structure could also be related to a fee structure for interpreters. Providers recognised the tension created within the profession when NQIs are able to charge the same fee as more experienced practitioners. Some agencies in other countries have a graded system of pay, and something like that could easily be introduced here. The lack of salary progression may well be contributing to people leaving the profession. Many interpreters are earning a ‘second salary’ and are heavily reliant on the regular income of their partners.

Such a structure might help shift a somewhat intransigent attitude towards continuing professional development held by some interpreters. One interviewee commented that some interpreters in Scotland see CPD as a “necessary evil” rather than an integral element of their professional practice, while others don’t feel the need to engage in any further development or study. Whatever CPD system is in place needs to be well monitored. There is a general view from those interviewed that the CPD system is better controlled within NRCPD than it has been at SASLI.

There should be more guidance and monitoring available for the profession. (BSL Scotland)

The importance of collaboration and joined up planning has been highlighted by the experience of delivering the online elective MSc modules at Queen Margaret University. The modules on specialist work in healthcare and mental healthcare proved problematic for some students from Scotland. This is because some Health Boards are now employing their own interpreters, resulting in other interpreters being unable to engage in health-related work. These commissioning decisions impact on the ability of Scotland-based

³⁰ Viewable at <https://www.naati.com.au/media/1585/naati-certification-model-website-version.pdf>

³¹ Details of the requirements for the different levels of NAATI certification can be viewed at https://www.naati.com.au/media/2224/certification-scheme-design-summary_auslan_may2019.pdf

interpreters to engage effectively with the specialist modules on healthcare and mental healthcare. The QMU students need to be engaging in healthcare work throughout the module to put their learning into practice and evidence their professional development in their assessments. Some students had to seek out work outside their normal geographic area of practice in order to study on the modules. One travelled to London in order to engage in mental health work. The result of this is that the expertise they have developed from this specialist study is being lost to Scotland due to the current procurement climate.

2.4.3 Collaboration

Collaboration is a theme that has emerged strongly across various data sets. Here it relates to the need for all interpreters to work together effectively regardless of their route into the profession, to the need for sustainability in the training and ongoing development of interpreters and to the planning that is required to underpin the delivery of interpreting services.

The academic/vocational divide

Data indicate something of a dichotomy between the two routes to the profession. Interpreters are entering the profession with very differing backgrounds, training experiences and knowledge. Many people within, or related to, the profession talk in very clear terms about their support of one route over the other and there are a lot of strongly held and articulated views and potential misconceptions, some of which are outlined earlier in the report.

Academic providers perceive one of the benefits of an academic route to registration as the high standard of graduates' work when interpreting from BSL into English. This is an affordance of university-educated interpreters and the high standard of English required for entry to the programme. The HWU undergraduate programme aims to produce smart, critical-thinking and reflective practitioners; the professionals that Scotland needs for the longer-term. There is a view that recruits to NVQ programmes are less likely to have the educational underpinnings to develop these same qualities in their students.

The NVQ system, on the other hand, provides a means to the register for those wishing to become interpreters who are not in a position to dedicate themselves to full-time study and/or study in a university environment. NVQ and academic routes to the interpreting register are likely to attract different types of students. Interviewees' responses indicate that the NVQ attracts more mature applicants, in contrast to the more educated young applicants for the undergraduate degree. Therefore one could argue that having both routes available within Scotland is of benefit. All training programmes are aimed at getting students to the 'safe to practice' stage. It is important to recognise that no students from any initial interpreter training programme emerge as experienced professionals.

One of the criticisms levied at the HWU programme by other stakeholders within this review is the fact that their students gain full registration on graduating, having never worked as regulated trainees. Elsewhere in the UK there are academic programmes that manage to incorporate more practical experience of interpreting within the programme. For example, students on the University of Wolverhampton's undergraduate degree programme can become regulated trainees for their final year of study, enabling them to start engaging in interpreting work. Unfortunately, this approach does not fit with the way the HWU programme is structured or validated by NRCPD.

Interviewees' responses indicate that the profession may be resistant to new developments and change.

Some of what makes the interpreting community intransigent is that they, and a generation within the deaf community, have trained each other to work in the same way. And if nothing changes that will still be the way things work in 30 years' time. It might seem like a trivial issue, but it actually underpins the whole landscape.

Sadly, one of the very real manifestations of the current antipathy between the academic and vocational routes is that of the horizontal violence experienced by some graduates of the Heriot-Watt undergraduate programme. Horizontal violence refers to hostile or aggressive behaviour towards individuals or groups of individuals. The programme attracts students from across Europe and tutors reported that some of these students appear to be experiencing increased negativity.

It is also telling that some very capable graduates take a look at the landscape here and say 'no thanks' and go elsewhere. So that means they are trained and funded at Scotland's expense, but are not staying here to work. (Professor Graham Turner, Heriot-Watt University)

Students on the HWU programme are therefore advised to develop their own strong support network in order to mitigate the negative attitudes towards them, and to prepare the students for the reality of the landscape. However, these support networks may inadvertently serve to reinforce the 'us and them' divide.

One interviewee proposed the idea of a central information hub for interpreters across Scotland as a potential solution to the status quo, adding that this had not yet happened, partly because of the fractured nature of training providers and professional associations/registration bodies. It was considered helpful to be able to get messages out to all interpreters and that not being able to could be exacerbating the lack of collaboration and cooperation between professionals.

A further initiative, proposed by one of the NVQ providers, was the idea of greater collaboration between vocational and academic training providers. All

exist for the purpose of expanding the interpreting profession, and different training pathways suit different types of student. Training pathways need to enable interpreters from all backgrounds to work effectively together. This necessarily entails buy-in from all relevant providers and the registration bodies they are working with.

Planning

Training providers indicated the importance of planning to ensure that future provision of interpreters meets demand. One interviewee expressed concern that interpreter training provision in Scotland is not future-proofed. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 has the potential to generate a much greater demand for interpreters that may not be met by the current number of interpreters. There is a feeling that the various training centres are working in isolation, without ensuring that all routes are producing similarly well-equipped and regulated professionals. Greater collaboration between different training providers would be a benefit and help towards delivering the well-trained interpreters that Scotland's BSL community needs.

Such planning needs to encompass the geographical challenges presented in Scotland. One provider noted that although their programme attracts students from across Scotland and the North of England, they had never had any students from the Highlands and Islands.

Staff at HWU recognise the growing need for BSL translation and the need for suitably trained and qualified deaf translators. One option could be the new BALS degree. The current undergraduate programme at HWU is not mapped to NRCPD translator (RSLT) registration so further changes would be required if this was a desired outcome.

Respondents recognise a further need to train the BSL community about how to work with interpreters, to ensure that everyone shares the same expectation of what interpreters can and cannot do. The ideal place to deliver this in a cost effective and sustainable way would be in school, as BSL pupils are easier to target whilst in education. Such training would equip deaf pupils with the knowledge they need for a successful transition to tertiary education and adult life. This would also ensure improved understanding nationwide.

Two interviewees suggested that establishing a committee of experts might be one way to assist the planning process. Such a committee, with representatives from the BSL community, interpreters and other key stakeholders could ensure that relevant knowledge and insight could feed in to policy development and support the work of the Scottish Government BSL Policy Officer. Including interpreters in the process in a meaningful way was seen as critical. A forum like this would be one way of discussing critical issues such as the use of technology for interpreting. One interviewee highlighted the importance of understanding how technology can be used effectively, with all parties having a clear understanding about when it is appropriate and when it is not. This all forms part of the 'bigger picture' that

has to form the basis of all future plans. The term most frequently used in relation to this by the interviewees was 'sustainability'.

Sustainability

Sustainability of interpreter training was a key theme to emerge from the data. One interviewee commented that too often we were 'reinventing the wheel' as information associated with earlier projects (such as the SASLI Apprenticeship Scheme) had been lost and was not available to feed into the development of current work. Another detrimental impact on sustainability is the current lack of collaboration between different training centres and routes. It was felt that the profession as a whole could be enhanced and better supported if greater collaboration was encouraged.

Another problem to date has been, not just the number of different initiatives funded, but the fact that these have been disconnected and produced no lasting impact.

Short term initiatives don't produce benefit and are often counterproductive. (Professor Graham Turner, Heriot-Watt University)

There is further evidence that exemplifies the importance of connection between interpreter development and their ultimate employment. One result of the new commissioning structures commonly being employed within large public sector organisations is that NQIs, who are usually more attracted to the security of employed positions, may fail to develop the breadth of practice desirable in their early years of professional development.

The NHS are starting to employ interpreters, but they don't have the knowledge of employing interpreters and can't provide the right structure and support. And then that interpreter won't get the variety of work and they become siloed almost immediately. You need a range of work to develop your skills and stamina for the fast-paced stuff and also the skills in the medical settings and empathy etc. So my fear is that if the public services employ their own interpreters, we will see a deskilling of the profession. (Tessa Slaughter, Staff Interpreter, Heriot-Watt University)

Better deployment of the interpreting workforce could also be achieved through the more effective use of interpreters undertaking Access to Work bookings. Respondents recognised how much interpreter time might be occupied with AtW bookings, where the interpreter has little interpreting to do. These interpreters are aware of the overall shortage of interpreters and that many ad hoc community bookings may be going uncovered. Where there are organisations that employ multiple staff it makes sense to engage with AtW and establish an interpreting team to support multiple deaf staff. This system has been operating successfully at HWU for a number of years, and this makes more effective use of interpreter capacity. If other organisations

applied this same model of provision this would increase the current capacity within the BSL/English interpreting profession.

One of the aims of the undergraduate programme at HWU is that it becomes a sustainable and regular delivery of interpreter training, with a regular annual intake. This is in contrast to other training providers in Scotland whose programmes run according to demand. The HWU programme is already exceeding the output of other training providers in Scotland and doing so on an annual basis. This means that over time the majority of interpreters in Scotland will have been trained via the HWU undergraduate programme. In the medium term, the balance of professionals trained via other routes will shift. In the longer term, the quality of graduates of the programme is likely to rise once applications start coming from school pupils who have studied BSL and achieved BSL qualifications validated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels as a result of the 1+2 languages policy.

2.4.4 Summary

Research participants involved in interpreter training in Scotland recognise that there is a real opportunity for change in Scotland, with the political will to effect change. Their responses identify five interconnecting key issues: funding, support of NQIs, transparency, sustainability and collaboration.

Responses reveal a desire for greater funding within the training sector. HWU would like increased funding to better support their Year 3 and 4 students while on placement. NVQ providers would like their students to be able to access support to help towards course fees. However, any funding is provided for interpreter training needs to be sustainable. This is exemplified in the ongoing SFC funded places at Heriot-Watt University. A further consideration should be the value for money obtained by such funding. Value for money can be related to the length of time that graduates from a programme are likely to remain in the profession, which may relate to their age on entering the profession. Value for money can additionally be related to whether or not interpreters are likely to remain working in Scotland. The vast majority of students from NVQ programmes continue to practice in Scotland, but data evidence that, contrary to popular belief, this is also true for HWU students.

There is a clear consensus for a formal system to support the development of NQIs. This may require further investment in the training of experienced interpreting practitioners to be able to effectively supervise and mentor those new to the profession. A support system needs to be available to all NQIs regardless of the route they have taken to achieve registration. Introducing trainees and NQIs to work in the healthcare sector is particularly challenging at present. These challenges are also noted as extending to more experienced practitioners wishing to undertake focused CPD relating to healthcare.

Collaboration is seen as a critical component of future progress in a number of ways.

Ideally we should end up in a situation where we are all being much more cooperative and everyone feels lifted. (Professor Graham Turner, Heriot-Watt University)

Both vocational and academic routes to the profession have strengths and weaknesses at present. The profession would benefit from a greater spirit of collaboration between vocational and academic training providers and their students. One additional benefit of this could be to help address the incidence of horizontal violence within the profession.

Collaboration needs to be seen more broadly, outside of the education sector. For example, the experience at QMU illustrates how registered interpreters can only make use of that advanced level of study in interpreting specialisms such as healthcare or justice if they are able to engage in the relevant fields of work. Current commissioning and procurement structures are creating a barrier to this and have the potential to reduce quality through deterring ongoing professional development.

Collaboration between training providers and registration bodies is also an essential component of all plans that relate to registration standards and the qualifications that are mapped to them.

The need for collaboration connects with the further requirement for transparency. Some historic practices with interpreter registration in Scotland have lacked the transparency required to ensure the safe regulation of the profession for all parties. Respondents' comments point to a subjective assessment process for SASLI applicants and a lack of a clear pathway towards registration for those who are unsuccessful at first attempt. The new registration body SRLPDC will hopefully address these issues and instigate robust processes that are transparent and applied equally to all applicants. This transparency needs to extend to published information about their own Customised Award.

Sustainability needs to be at the heart of all future planning, and particularly in relation to the ongoing support needed by NQI.

We need to find a sustainable mechanism for probationary year support. (Professor Jemina Napier, Heriot-Watt University)

Respondents from the education sector, and other respondents in this study, would argue that one year is insufficient for this purpose. However, the sustainability of such a scheme is paramount. Similarly, whatever funding is in place for interpreter training also needs to be made available on a sustainable basis.

Sustainability can also be related to interpreters' ongoing career development. The lack of career structure is recognised as problematic. There is the potential to create a career structure along the lines of the

Australian NAATI model. However, this may be more likely to be achieved by a single registration body, and it is questionable how a small registration body such as SRLPDC could operate a system as robust as the NAATI one given the relatively small number of registrations (and potential future registrants) within Scotland. Such a structure could integrate well with a differential pay structure for interpreters of different skill levels. In the meantime, agencies have the potential to create their own pay structures. As one respondent commented, saying ‘that’s not how it works’ is unhelpful, because this is something that agencies have the power to influence.

The data from the interpreter training sector therefore identify a need for:

- ensuring value for money and sustainability in the ongoing funding of interpreter training
- a sustainable mechanism for formal supervision and support of all newly qualified interpreters.
- greater collaboration between vocational and academic interpreter training providers
- the potential for a registration system involving different levels of registration, which could also link to differential fee levels and the attainment of post-registration interpreting qualifications

Data additionally reinforce the importance of incorporating the interpreter perspective into the ongoing implementation of the BSL National Plan, possibly through representation on a committee of experts.

2.5 Interpreting Agencies

Interviews were conducted with three specialist BSL/English interpreting agencies based in Scotland, namely:

- Sign Language Interactions
- Deaf Action
- Deaf Services Lanarkshire

This is not a comprehensive list of the specialist agencies operating in Scotland but represents agencies of different sizes and geographical coverage, those within third sector organisation and those who operate on a commercial basis. The figures reported here are based on interviewees' responses only.

Deaf Action

The Communication and Interpreting Agency at Deaf Action is part of a long-established Edinburgh-based charity that provides a range of services in relation to the deaf community. The CIA employs 3.5FTE interpreters, although one of these works primarily as the manager of the service. The agency also nominally works with 59 self-employed interpreters, although only around 12 on a regular basis. Services are focussed mainly on Edinburgh and the Lothians but also extend into other areas in the east of Scotland and into the Borders. Daily bookings range between five and 20.

Deaf Services Lanarkshire

Deaf Services Lanarkshire provides a range of services to the deaf community in Lanarkshire. These services include operating as an interpreting agency. The agency does not currently employ any interpreters, although three are listed as staff on the organisation's website. A small pool of four freelance interpreters is engaged to cover the interpreting bookings. Approximately 12 bookings are covered per day.

Sign Language Interactions

Sign Language Interactions (SLi) is a commercial agency established in 2003. It took on the contract for providing NHS24 BSL in 2009 and the national video relay service (VRS) known as contactSCOTLAND-BSL in 2016. It now additionally runs a video remote interpreting (VRI) service called SLi-NOW! The agency currently employs six FTE interpreters and uses around 40 self-employed interpreters on a regular basis. The agency covers bookings across Scotland, and has service level agreements with a variety of public bodies, covering an average of over 20 bookings per day.

Themes from the data

Although the three categories discussed here arise directly from questions that were posed in the interviews, the individual themes within them reflect the open discussion with the participants. The themes fall into the following broad categories:

- supply and demand
- standards and quality

2.5.1 Supply and demand

All respondents discussed the demand for interpreting services, how well they were able to meet this demand and the challenges they encounter in the process.

Demand

Two agencies reported a gradually increasing demand year on year. In contrast, the third indicated that the last three years have been stable but were preceded by a period of steady growth.

One respondent commented that health-related bookings had increased by 10%, which was assumed to result from the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and greater awareness in both the BSL community and among the Health Boards generated through the consultation phase of the Bill and the creation of the BSL National Plan.

Demand on different days of the week seems to vary between agencies, indicating that there is no general peak demand. One agency indicated that the greatest demand falls in the first half of the week, and this can make covering bookings on these days a challenge. Another commented that the busiest days of the week seem to fluctuate each year while the third said they had noticed an annual pattern of supply and demand, with demand being more problematic in the spring. Whenever demand is high, this impacts on the ability to cover ad hoc community work.

The demand for interpreting services currently outstrips supply, so not all bookings can be fulfilled. Not all agencies were recording unmet demand, but one reported 1-2 bookings per day would probably go unfilled. This was often due to the short notice frequently given for NHS bookings noted by all participants.

Client base

All three agencies indicated that most of the demand for interpreters comes from within the public sector, with health sector work a key focus for all.

The two charitable sector agencies mainly provide interpreters for the public sector. One additionally provides Communication Support Workers to support students in Further Education. They noted that the number of CSWs is declining as many of these individuals are now on interpreter training programmes. Responses indicate that the sectors that require interpreting services may fluctuate, with one agency now delivering more work to local authorities rather than the NHS as they had in the past.

The commercial agency, SLi, incorporates the online services delivered as SLi-NOW! and contactSCOTLAND-BSL, both of which are 24/7 services. The VRI service is mainly used within hospitals. The agency has additional

contracts to work with various public sector bodies both at national and regional levels.

Interpreter availability

All agencies reported good retention rates for staff. Where possible, all agencies rely on their own staff to provide interpreting services, but supplement this with freelance interpreters.

One agency reported being generally able to cover bookings given five or more days' notice. Another noted a challenge in covering ad hoc community bookings because the number of interpreters available for this type of work has always been much smaller than the number of registered interpreters nominally available; many interpreters are occupied with regular AtW bookings which significantly reduces availability for community work.

It was noted that there is further impact on availability as not all interpreters work with all agencies, which reduces the general availability of interpreters still further.

Geographic challenges

All the agencies commented on the geographic challenges presented in providing interpreters across Scotland, particularly in more rural areas. Geographical considerations are essential when scheduling interpreting appointments in order to ensure interpreters' time is used effectively. Some areas such as Dumfries and Galloway, the Borders, the Highlands and the North East were noted as presenting particular problems due to the lack of local practitioners.

Interviewees noted that although some interpreters are prepared to travel farther afield for work, there are additional on-costs to the bookers as a result of the time and expense incurred.

Booking processes

Sharing relevant information to the various parties involved in an interpreter booking is an important element of the booking process.

Agencies inform whoever makes a booking, the name of the interpreter allocated to them. However, the booker is not always the end user of the service. Both charitable sector agencies additionally inform the deaf client whenever possible, but this is now problematic with NHS bookings where the patient's name is not known. This means that the name of the deaf patient cannot be provided to the interpreter, which generates further problems. The commercial agency has its own online portal through which interpreters can access information about the bookings.

All agencies aim to provide continuity of interpreter when there is a series of appointments, as often occurs with NHS bookings. The commercial agency has contracts with a number of regional Health Boards and allocates specific interpreters to work to these contracts. When the same interpreter is not

available for a follow-on appointment, they are usually able to substitute with another interpreter with whom the patient will be familiar.

The other agencies commented that providing continuity with NHS appointments is highly problematic due to the lack of patient information provided by the NHS at the time of booking. However, both agencies prioritise continuity for other bookings where possible, aiming to provide interpreters who have the appropriate skills and experience for the booking, or who have been requested by the client.

Greater awareness about the value of interpreter continuity is needed from the public body perspective.

Increased awareness among the interpreting booking teams is required to understand the importance of continuity and appropriate skills of interpreters for appointments. (Deaf Services Lanarkshire)

However, it was recognised that such client knowledge is often compromised given the degree of staff turnover within public bodies.

Client-based challenges

The two agencies with the smaller staff interpreter teams commented explicitly about the challenge of covering NHS bookings which are frequently requested at very short notice.

The NHS tends to wait until a few days before, resulting in a number of unmet requests. (Deaf Services Lanarkshire)

For one agency the increase in short notice bookings was a direct result of a change in the booking process used within their local Health Board, which started dealing with interpreting bookings in-house as opposed to contracting with the local authority's interpretation service with which the agency had a contract. This change, made in June 2017, has also resulted in reduced information being available about the booking, including the patient's name. The lack of information makes it impossible to select an appropriate interpreter for the client, and also to provide continuity of interpreter provision across a series of appointments. It has also put an end to the practice of the agency informing the deaf client who their interpreter will be.

I know some patients don't attend because they are not sure if an interpreter is going to be there or not. We are getting direct feedback from deaf people about this. (Shaurna Dickson, Communication and Training Manager, Deaf Action)

Interviewees said that the NHS cites GDPR as the reason for not sharing the information. However, some of the difficulty could be arising because the IT system they are using for interpreter bookings is the same as for their general staff bank which limits the input of relevant information. The lack of information can have multiple consequences.

We have situations where we have booked an interpreter and they go along and it turns out it wasn't a BSL interpreter needed but a Russian or Urdu one, or whatever. The problem is, we can't recognise patient names that don't seem right, so the NHS end up paying for BSL interpreters who aren't needed, and the patient goes without the spoken language interpreter they need. (Shaurna Dickson, Communication and Training Manager, Deaf Action)

When BSL/English interpreters are booked incorrectly like this there is an impact on the BSL community. It results in a reduced number of interpreters available for working with deaf people, while adding to the cost of interpreting provision overall.

Last week one person covered three jobs for us in one day, and two of them were no shows because of issues like this. The interpreter may still be getting paid but they aren't actually doing anything. And we are all conscious that interpreters are in short supply, so you know there is probably someone else out there with no interpreter while one is busy doing nothing. (Shaurna Dickson, Communication and Training Manager, Deaf Action)

Further problems are created by the length of the booking chain. This is more frequently experienced when dealing with GP bookings. For example, when a patient needs a repeat booking, the receptionist will phone through to the in-house interpreting service within the Health Board. This does not confirm the booking, it is just making the initial request, but this is not clear to the receptionist or the patient. Although feedback has been provided to the NHS on these issues, it was felt that there appears to be a lack of interest in dealing with the problems.

GDPR and online security has also impacted on the planned provision of online interpreting for some Health Boards. One agency was planning a joint provision in collaboration with an established VRS provider, but this was problematic due to the stringent firewall systems used by the Health Board combined with a lack of understanding about how such a system would work.

Tendering for contracts

The way interpreting services are provided by public bodies has changed over time.

The landscape has changed [...] because of the evolution of interpreting, from being ad hoc to being contracts, frameworks and the like. (Andrew Dewey, Director, Sign Language Interactions)

Responses indicate the value of collaborative working to ensure effective provision of interpreting services. This is seen as essential given the complexity of supply and demand for interpreters.

Agency administration fees represent the work that goes into processing booking requests and the added value that using an agency presents to the clients. Agencies consider this to be the added value they contribute to the process, but some commented that not all clients appreciate the necessity of these additional costs.

Scotland is seen as having the opportunity and potential to structure services more effectively in a way that England cannot. There is the potential for a central booking system for interpreters, which would perhaps allow interpreters to work closer to home, reducing travel time and expenditure. Data indicate that coherence in registration of interpreters would simplify the interpreting landscape for everyone and could assist with the commissioning of interpreting services.

The situation with tendering for contracts fails to recognise the reality of the interpreting landscape.

It is the same pool of interpreters who are being used, no matter who has the various framework contracts. (Shaurna Dickson, Communication and Training Manager, Deaf Action)

Comments highlight how the tendering processes used by public bodies favour larger and more corporate organisations that can draw on expert advice to present more effective bids. Third sector organisations appear to be disadvantaged by such approaches.

Data suggest that with only a few specialist agencies bidding for public sector contracts this creates an atmosphere of competitiveness that inhibits the potential for collaboration. This is fuelled by organisations' need to win contracts in order to survive. Some agencies have worked in collaboration with others to try to secure contracts. However, there now appears to be a trend towards some Health Boards employing their own in-house staff, another strategy that was perceived as risky.

2.5.2 Standards and quality

Several of the themes emerging from the interviews relate to quality and standards issues.

Registration

Agencies agreed on the need for robust systems around interpreter training and registration. They felt that this could be achieved through more standardisation across different training centres and potentially having one register for simplicity.

There is a perception that there are now a lot of trainee or newly qualified interpreters. There are mixed perceptions around the competency of graduates from the Heriot-Watt undergraduate programme, with some noted as "not working at a qualified level". One agency commented about the challenge of having a bigger pool of interpreters, but who lacked the

experience to engage with more complex work like mental healthcare, conferences or any situation where the need for standards was higher.

All agencies interviewed ensure they know the skillset of the interpreters they work with. For one agency this includes conducting its own skills tests regardless of the registration status of the interpreter, and in addition to the SASLI/SRLPDC skills test. This then determines whether the interpreter will be paid at a trainee or registered rate.

Reliability

Agencies reported that occasionally interpreters arrive late for appointments. This is invariably due to travel issues and the agency is alerted beforehand. One of the smaller agencies often has the capacity to cover bookings at the last minute if an interpreter is unable to attend. However, data indicate that some complaints about interpreters not presenting at an appointment are caused by late bookings making it impossible for the agency to fulfil the request.

Training

Data indicate a desire for more coherent planning of interpreting provision and training.

There is a lack of joined up planning in how we deliver training and how supply is organised. (Andrew Dewey, Director, Sign Language Interactions)

I think something that combines the academic and vocational route would be better. (Shaurna Dickson, Communication and Training Manager, Deaf Action)

There is a perception that HWU graduates lack practical experience and exposure to the interpreting and BSL communities, and that they may be less familiar with the breadth of the BSL community and less embedded within agencies than those training via the NVQ route. It was felt that many of those entering the profession via the NVQ route had closer personal connections with the BSL community prior to their training but all NVQ candidates were able to develop these connections throughout their period as trainee interpreters, which facilitates their “work readiness” on qualification.

Remuneration

Interviewees’ comments indicate that payment for interpreters appears to operate on a fixed rate basis for many agencies, with little or no differentiation for out of hours work or the allowance for additional travel costs that this might entail.

One agency commented on the lack of differentiation between the rates paid to NQI and more experienced practitioners. This was seen as a source of tension within the profession. However, the agency in question had not created a differential pay scale for the interpreters they contract and expressed the need for guidance on this to be provided by an external body

such as NUBSLI. Data suggest that interpreters trained via an academic route may be more assertive in trying to negotiate fees reflective of the type and timing of bookings, but that agencies may lack the fee structures to accommodate this flexibility.

Specialist skills

Agencies commented on a lack of interpreters with appropriate skills to meet the needs of all clients and appointments, for example working with elderly clients, those from the St Vincent's community in Glasgow (who have particular dialectal differences), or those with additional needs.

There is a lack of accredited, approved and domain specific training provision. Some of the training available is expensive. The quality of training provision is highly variable as it is not properly regulated. (Deaf Services Lanarkshire)

In Scotland we haven't had as many deaf professionals as down south, so interpreters here haven't had the opportunity to work with people at that level and are not getting those opportunities. (Shaurna Dickson, Communication and Training Manager, Deaf Action)

Responses indicate that some interpreters are reluctant to engage in more challenging work. Many interpreters lack confidence in engaging in high profile work or working with BSL users from outside their locality. This lack of confidence is exacerbated when work is recorded or broadcast/live streamed. Interpreters feel they are opening themselves up to criticism and wish to avoid that. For example, recruiting interpreters to work in high profile political contexts was considered a challenge. However, agencies do not expect newly qualified interpreters to have the confidence to work in high profile situations. These contexts therefore represent one of the areas in which NQIs require continued training and development post registration.

Feedback

All three agencies encourage feedback on their services. This is gathered in various ways. For one agency feedback is elicited in feedback days, one-to-one conversations, comment postcards, FaceTime/Skype calls and videos. The other two agencies reported that feedback tends to be received from deaf people rather than corporate and public sector clients. The majority of complaints relate to inability to fulfil a booking. Rarely a complaint might concern an interpreter's lack of professionalism or because of a communication breakdown between the deaf client and the interpreter.

One agency reported having organised special events for the BSL community to feed back to the NHS about healthcare interpreting provision. Interpreters and BSL community members attended, to engage directly with NHS staff, but unfortunately this has not resulted in any change.

Agency registration

One agency commented favourably about the register of agencies established by SASLI. Although Scotland may lack the proliferation of agencies evident in England it was felt that some regulation of agencies is useful. Being a registered agency could be seen as beneficial when tendering for contracts if seen as a mark of quality assurance by the service commissioners.

2.5.3 Summary

Data indicate that there may be some differences in the ethos and operation of commercially driven agencies in comparison to those with charitable status. Interviewee comments suggest that third sector agencies with a local geographic remit may have stronger ties with the BSL communities they serve.

For all agencies, however, there are several challenges with interpreting provision in the current climate. Frequently, the added value that agencies could be providing to clients and interpreters does not exist due to convoluted booking processes. These long booking chains are particularly evident within the NHS. This detracts from the effectiveness of the interpreting services provided.

A competitive culture currently exists which may also be to the detriment of effective service provision. This competition is seen as existing more generally within the profession, and in some cases related to different training routes to registration, as one interviewee commented.

There is too much self-interest and a lack of cohesion in the profession.

Responses highlight a real need for collaboration, both in relation to interpreter training and to the commissioning and delivery of services. Data illustrate the need for a coherent approach, starting with the initial booking and continuing through to the interpreted interaction. Any structure will be weakened if there are multiple systems within it, particularly when those systems lack cohesion.

Comments around the variation in competence of newly registered interpreters and one agency conducting their own skills checks in addition to those conducted by SASLI/SRLPDC suggest a lack of confidence in registration standards. However, this attitude might be localised to certain organisations.

The data evidence the ongoing need for interpreter development post-registration, particularly in order to address the difficulties in finding interpreters who have the confidence to take on more challenging or complex work. However, where these skills and greater experience exist, these need to be recognised with appropriate remuneration although agencies may not have the confidence to establish differential pay scales.

2.6 Interpreters

An online survey of BSL/English interpreters working in Scotland was launched on 1 March 2019 and open for responses for the remainder of the month. Responses were invited from both registered and un-registered interpreters.

Sixty-nine responses to the survey were received, with 18 interpreters indicating that they were willing to participate in follow-up semi-structured interviews. Twelve of these respondents were subsequently interviewed and gave their views about the provision of interpreters and the state of the profession in Scotland.

Table 4: Responses to the interpreter survey

Category	Number of responses
Registered interpreters (SASLI or NRCPD)	48
Trainee interpreters (SASLI or NRCPD)	11
Interpreting students	3
Un-registered interpreters	7

The respondents are representative of the profession as a whole, with 87% identifying as female. A minority stated that BSL was their first or preferred language (3) with a greater number (15) indicating that BSL was used in the home. Although the majority of respondents are self-employed, the responses also represent those who are employed by institutions (7 full-time and 6 part-time) and interpreting agencies (7 full-time and 3 part-time).

The positive response rate indicates interpreters' enthusiasm to engage in discussion around the profession and how this needs to be considered within the work delivered following the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

One good thing about the landscape review is that interpreters are finally getting a say. Through the bill and plan consultation phases their views were not taken into account. But what they have to say is really important because the interpreters have the experience on the ground to feed in and we should definitely have a seat at whatever forum exists. (Professor Jemina Napier, Heriot-Watt University)

Thirty-five of the survey respondents reported being involved in earlier consultations, but 32 said that they had not. Those who were not involved believed that the local events were for deaf people, not interpreters, or that hearing people were not to be consulted. Comments indicate that the only event set up specifically for interpreters was poorly advertised and not easily accessible to interpreters across Scotland. Survey comments indicate that their involvement in the consultation process was too little and too late.

Responses highlight the importance of including interpreters in a more meaningful way.

Interpreters must be there for every step of the way when it comes to people making decisions about the profession. We often have decisions foisted upon us which are not right. There should be more collaborative working, and more standing up for the profession. We need to ensure the future of the profession.

This Landscape Review therefore represents a genuine opportunity for interpreters to contribute to the future of BSL/English interpreting provision in Scotland.

Themes from the data

The main issues that interpreters identify concern:

- difficulties with agencies and procurement systems
- GDPR
- Access to Work (AtW)
- geographical challenges
- horizontal violence
- the lack of support for students, trainees and newly qualified interpreters

This section addresses these and other issues, where they are woven into discussion around the key headings of distribution, deployment, sourcing work, developing the profession and professionalism. All quotations come from comments made by survey respondents.

2.6.1 Distribution

One of the key challenges of the Landscape Review was ascertaining the number of registered interpreters across Scotland. BSL/English interpreters in Scotland can be registered with either NRCPD or SASLI. Some interpreters are dual registered with both organisations, but a cross check with both registration bodies confirmed that in March 2019 there were 109 registered interpreters in the country.

Survey responses came from interpreters across Scotland. Their locations reflect the locations of registered interpreters more generally.

Figure 1: Comparison of survey respondents and registered interpreters in March 2019



Survey Respondents

Registered Interpreters

These maps reveal clear gaps of provision in terms of interpreters' home locations. The survey additionally ascertained the areas in which interpreters work, appreciating that some may work outside of their local areas. Responses to this indicate that most interpreters prefer to work close to home whenever possible. For some this is essential, due to logistical reasons. Only six respondents indicated they would be prepared to work anywhere in Scotland. Geographic areas in which fewer than 10 interpreters work include Na h-Eilean Siar Orkney, Shetland, Argyll and Bute, Moray, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Angus, Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Clackmannanshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and East Renfrewshire. Although 10 interpreters report working regularly within Highland, this is a large geographic area and registered interpreters are based around Inverness.

Ten interpreters said that they regularly work in a different area from their home location. Not all provided reasons for this but three were motivated by regular work they were able to secure, one by the specialist nature of their work and two travelled to employed positions.

Availability

Data on working patterns is unfortunately messy given the construct of the survey questions, but underscore the part-time working patterns of a significant number of interpreters.

Data from other areas of this Landscape Review reveal a perception among the BSL community that a large amount of the interpreting capacity in Scotland is taken up with Access to Work bookings. Interpreter survey data indicate that up to 50% of interpreter capacity could be used up by AtW bookings. Those undertaking ad hoc bookings typically only cover one per day (47%) with a further 32% covering two bookings. Although it is commonly thought that interpreters need to be booked far in advance, responses indicate that 56% accept ad hoc bookings with less than a week's notice.

Data indicate that approximately 48% of the working capacity of registered/regulated survey respondents is available for ad hoc bookings. This category of ad hoc bookings is broader than community-based work and includes one-off meetings, training courses, conferences and events. These figures indicate that the number of interpreters available for non AtW assignments is potentially significantly lower than the overall number of interpreters.

However, 47% of survey respondents reported having days when they would like to work but no work was available.

Availability for out of hours work is unsurprisingly reduced. Night work generally involves emergency medical or legal issues. Nineteen registered interpreters said they were occasionally booked to do such work, with a further three regularly undertaking this kind of work.

In contrast, evening work might involve a much broader range of activities in addition to emergency requests. Thirty-two respondents said they occasionally worked during the evening with eight doing so on a regular basis.

2.6.2 Deployment

Almost half (28) of the respondents said they were happy with the amount of interpreting they did. Some appreciate the ebb and flow of work, while others indicated that this could be problematic. One example is when interpreters working within education cannot get additional work in the holiday periods. Some commented that they would like to work more frequently and were concerned that their skills would deteriorate with lack of use. Comments additionally indicate that agency control over work allocation impacts on some

interpreters, as do the commissioning arrangements by some of the public bodies, rendering certain sectors of work inaccessible to some professionals.

The following tables provide an indication of the areas of work in which interpreters are most frequently employed. Every domain of work was listed as scarce by some respondents. However, the scarcity of work is highest in relation to working with deaf children and young people and deafblind clients. This pattern appears across all areas of Scotland.

Health

Table 5: Frequency of work in healthcare settings

Setting	Often	Occasionally	Never
GP	23	18	19
Hospital outpatient	22	17	21
Dentist	16	25	20
Hospital inpatient	14	22	23
Physiotherapy	13	25	20
Opticians	11	26	21
Mental health	8	16	31
Counselling	8	17	31
Occupational Health	6	27	23
Mental health inpatient	5	18	32

The first column of this table appears representative of the normal frequency of health appointments, GP appointments being the most frequent, followed by hospital outpatients. The last column is interesting as the highest number of appointments not taken (and the lowest for “often”) relate to mental health, which would suggest that this is a specialist area of work.

It is to be expected that all of the interpreters work in GP surgeries and hospitals, as these are the most frequently advertised bookings. However, procurement issues generate the greatest barrier for interpreters wishing to undertake healthcare work. Five areas of Scotland were noted as presenting these barriers. Participants reported that the NHS often works with an agency to fill these appointments, and that medical interpreting is ring-fenced by certain organisations. “Preferred” interpreters are given the medical work. Some interpreters reported that they used to do medical, but procurement arrangements have changed and they now do none. One reported that a particular NHS Board expects interpreters to do more than one assignment in the two hour slot. Another reported that a different NHS Board has a bank of interpreters on a zero hours’ contract with unfavourable terms and conditions.

Education

Table 6: Frequency of work in educational settings

Setting	Often	Occasionally	Never
College	18	22	19
HE	14	19	21

School	11	13	32
Apprenticeship	3	8	40

Some interpreters work full time in schools. For some this has been a necessity, because agency staff have taken over the majority of community bookings. One respondent indicated that working in education could be exhausting and therefore potentially damaging for interpreters. Respondents highlight how important it is for all concerned to remember that simply having an interpreter present does not eliminate the need for other professionals to modify their own behaviour and communication style. All parties need to appreciate that the interpreter is there for everyone present.

Data indicate that those working as communication support workers (CSWs) in schools are also at risk of being undervalued and overstretched. They are language professionals and should not be taking on the roles of the other professionals they work alongside. A detailed analysis of the work of CSWs is outside the scope of the Landscape Review and further research on this may be required.

Employment

Table 7: Frequency of work in employment settings

Setting	Often	Occasionally	Never
AtW	28	18	13
Translation BSL-English for AtW	10	8	36
Translation English-BSL for AtW	7	10	38
VRS/VRI for AtW	3	13	41
Job seekers'	7	18	30
Job interviews	6	27	25
VRS/VRI contact SCOTLAND-BSL	4	1	52
Translation English-BSL for website	3	7	48
Working to camera	2	11	42
Working to camera recorded	1	23	33
Translation BSL-English for website	1	8	48
VRS/VRI other	1	3	51

Further comments on **Access to Work (AtW) interpreting** are detailed within a later section.

Arts and media

Table 8: Frequency of work in arts and media settings

Setting	Often	Occasionally	Never
Religion	11	21	29
Theatre	10	15	34
Festivals	7	16	34
Deaf events	6	34	19
Arts/Tours	5	35	18

Political Conferences	3	12	43
Parliament	1	14	41
TV	1	11	47

Comments indicate that un-registered interpreters are used in some festival settings, sometimes provided by local Deaf organisations. Data also indicate that attracting interpreters to cover religious bookings can be problematic, this may relate to payment issues discussed under *Unpaid work*.

Legal

Table 9: Frequency of work in legal settings

Setting	Often	Occasionally	Never
Social work	16	18	26
Solicitors	8	18	33
Children's Hearings	6	22	32
Police	6	16	38
Sheriff Court civil matters	5	12	42
Sheriff Court criminal	5	9	45
Justice of the Peace	5	8	46
High Court	3	7	49
Court of Session	3	4	51
Mental Health Tribunal	2	14	43
Prison	2	16	41
Educational Tribunal	0	13	45

These data illustrate that very few interpreters are working in legal situations. For some, this indicates their lack of interest in the domain or procurement issues creating a barrier, but primarily the underlying reason is that of feeling unprepared for it. Reasons given for this were:

- lack of training
- training that has only been available for SASLI members
- agencies using only in-house/staff interpreters

Working in legal situations, particularly within court and police contexts, can be perceived as highly risky by interpreters. Comments indicate that interpreters felt that SASLI could have provided greater support with this when required.

Deafblind

Table 10: Frequency of work with deafblind people

Setting	Often	Occasionally	Never
Visual frame	13	18	29
Hands on signing	8	23	32
Guiding	4	14	41

Working with visual frame or tactile BSL is another area in which few interpreters regularly engage. Many participants would like more training, others had training but commented that the work does not come up very frequently. One participant commented that the CPD work they had done in this area had been rejected by SASLI as not relevant. Data also indicate that demand for this type of work is low.

Children and young people

Table 11: Frequency of work with children and young people

Setting	Often	Occasionally	Never
Events/shows	7	31	21
Youth Groups	5	30	24
Health	4	25	30
Mental Health	4	15	37

The low response rate for health bookings may be impacted by current procurement arrangements, particularly where NHS boards are not making use of local interpreters. However, for the majority of interpreters it is evident that working with children and young people is a rare occurrence.

Working for public bodies

Interpreters reported that public bodies are not willing to accept their fees. Some interpreters who were available for work in health, for example, did not have access to that type of work because the public body did not accept the interpreters' fees.

Sometimes a public body would take on interpreters as employees. This is seen as impacting on both the freelance interpreters in the area and on the employees. Being a member of staff tends to limit the amount of professional decision-making the interpreter can justify. Interpreters working for public bodies and for agencies reported being made to interpret in situations for which they were not ready. They talked about how hearing people, who were not BSL users, were making judgements about what they could, or could not do. Equally, freelance interpreters described working with staff interpreters who were not ready or were not prepared to do the work they had been sent to do. One interpreter described an employed interpreter telling them that they would not interpret from BSL into English which left the freelancer to do the bulk of the interpreting in that situation.

Interpreters feel that the value of booking professional interpreters is not recognised by all public bodies. In some situations this leads to un-trained and un-registered interpreters being used in situations that require registered interpreters. Within the NHS there is not consistent recognition that working within mental healthcare is a specialism in which not all interpreters have expertise.

Barriers to certain domains

Participants indicate that the most prevalent reasons for not engaging with work in particular domains relate to the inaccessibility of training. This may be because there is no appropriate training on offer, or it is too far, time-consuming and expensive to attend. Where training is held in the Central Belt, this needs to be advertised well in advance to allow those living further afield to plan their attendance. While training during the week can impact on interpreters' income, weekend events also have an impact on interpreters' wellbeing and family lives. Exclusion from training was mentioned; theatre interpreting was seen as a closed shop, and non SASLI members commented that they had been unable to access SASLI training.

Further data reveal that media, justice and deafblind work are the three areas in which interpreters are less likely to feel prepared. Interpreters indicating their lack of readiness to these types of work are predominantly from within the Central Belt. These domains of work are also among those that interpreters choose not to do, with working in the media the least popular field (16 respondents said they chose not to engage in this work).

Another critical reason for not working in some domains relates to procurement arrangements. Where public bodies have employed interpreters the work is then not available to local freelance interpreters. Where public bodies contract with interpreting agencies, these agencies may not engage with some interpreters, or those interpreters may not engage with the agency because of the poor terms and conditions offered. Non-specialist agencies are seen as lacking the geographic knowledge or local contacts required to make informed decisions about choice of interpreters; this is particularly problematic for current DWP and educational tribunal bookings. Framework agreements are effectively reducing choice of interpreters for the BSL community and mean that interpreters who have specialist skills in particular domains of work are no longer able to use this expertise.

Access to Work (AtW) interpreting

Almost half the respondents (34) stated that they engage in Access to Work (AtW) interpreting. AtW interpreting was a particular focus in many of the responses and reveals many difficulties for interpreters. One of these is the pastoral role which the interpreter may need to take on for some of their clients.

Working in AtW, sometimes means that the interpreter is exposed to dealing with issues that should be dealt with by the employer/line manager. These are things like emotional issues, stress, lack of confidence in performing their role.

Fourteen respondents indicated they were involved in the bureaucracy of the AtW system. The process of getting an AtW allocation of hours is complicated and is navigated in written English, which is therefore problematic for many in the BSL community. Interpreters report needing to assist deaf clients by writing supporting letters to describe the necessity for an interpreter, having to

deal with much of the paperwork themselves or remind the client about what needs to be done. Responses indicate that for some interpreters this can feel quite traumatic as they are frequently dealing with phone calls to AtW staff who do not understand the needs of the BSL community. The amount of work involved can reach the point when interpreters consider this one of their prime functions, rather than providing access to the deaf client's job.

In addition, the process of checking a deaf person's English can cause friction between the deaf client and interpreter. Interpreters stated that they want the best English for their clients, but this must be negotiated carefully, without making clients feel "corrected".

Interpreters also report that a formerly good relationship between interpreter and client can be adversely affected due to the deaf client believing they are the interpreter's boss. Data indicate that difficulties arise when:

- A client does not want the interpreter to talk to other members of the team because they "belong" to the client.
- The client complains (to the interpreter) that the interpreter is being paid more than they are.
- One day the interpreter may be doing very little, the next they can be working all day without a break, sometimes the client believes this evens itself out.
- Much of the time the interpreter is not needed by the client and the interpreter will be aware that there may be other jobs which are not being filled due to lack of interpreters. This can cause stress to the interpreter who will be told about jobs not being filled, and knowing that they could have been available.
- Skilled interpreters are often booked for AtW well in advance, leaving less skilled interpreters to cover ad hoc jobs, which could be more crucial than a day in an office.
- Deaf clients may book interpreters even when there is not much work required, in order to maintain their allocated hours for the following year.
- Some clients will dictate how the interpreter works, despite not understanding the job. Interpreters find it difficult to negotiate around this because the deaf client is responsible for payment.

On some occasions AtW interpreters may get involved in finding another interpreter to work alongside them at an event/meeting. This was generally considered quite a challenge depending on how much notice was given, with last minute requests being "near impossible" to cover. This is further indication of the lack of availability of interpreters across the country and evidence that interpreters are unable to follow good practice of co-working for longer assignments.

Online interpreting

Although few respondents engage in commercial VRI/VRS provision, several participants commented on the increasing amount of online interpreting across Scotland. Survey respondents indicate that in some areas online provision is becoming the norm, despite resistance by the BSL community. There is concern about the knock on effect this may have for local interpreting provision as it will result in interpreters having to look outside their locality for work. There is further concern that the online provision currently used in Scotland does not follow the good practice of some of the collaborative schemes developed elsewhere in the UK, such as the collaboration between SignVideo and Islington Borough Council.

2.6.3 Sourcing Work

As noted elsewhere in this report the geography of Scotland creates challenges to the availability of interpreters. Data from interpreters evidence how it can also challenge their ability to provide interpreting services, illustrating a geographical disadvantage for interpreters as well as the BSL community.

I have been disadvantaged due to where I live. I didn't grow up in the deaf community. There are complaints about not having interpreters, but there must be people like me who would like to, but aren't booked due to the cost of travel.

Interpreters expressed a preference for not working via agencies, which tends to generate problems both with individual agencies and through the procurement systems underpinning agency contracts.

General procurement issues

The current landscape of procuring interpreting services has become increasingly problematic for interpreters. Large-scale procurement arrangements entered into by public bodies are problematic on both macro and micro levels.

Procurement for new contracts can be unrealistic (24/7, 365, short notice). Agencies who say they can provide all that do not understand the interpreting situation. They add clauses which say things like "on occasion the interpreter will be required to cover consecutive appointments in an agreed time period to reflect best value". They do not understand the health and safety difficulties involved. Bigger agencies who are taking on BSL/English interpreters do not understand the community either. They also put interpreters who are newly qualified in assignments they should be supported in.

Interpreters related that where non-specialist agencies win contracts, they typically sub-contract the BSL interpreting work to other agencies. This is widely considered to be a waste of public funds. Companies driven by profit appear to allocate interpreters on the basis of cost rather than appropriate

skills. Data suggest that this perpetuates an unhelpful culture of competition for work, which does not encourage professional cooperation.

Participants reported that one end result of these contractual arrangements is a disconnect between booking procedures, which no longer allow interpreters to be booked at source, for example at an outpatient clinic if an interpreter is not on the agency's list. What they feel is needed, is greater communication about bookings to ensure the deaf client knows which interpreter is booked, and the interpreter knows the name of the deaf client.

Respondents called for a simplification of the systems for booking interpreters which could be centralised for greater consistency across the country. Greater collaboration between public bodies, local organisations and interpreters is required to ensure effective interpreting services. National framework agreements are perceived as creating a barrier to effective provision.

Working for agencies

Data indicate that interpreters' reluctance to be booked via agencies is motivated by various reasons relating to agencies' power, incompetence and, being poor value for money.

Agencies reduce the autonomy of freelance interpreters who may have to accept fees and terms and conditions prescribed by the agency; some agencies pay registered interpreters at trainee rates. Some hold their own "registers" and only engage with interpreters who have signed up to the agency's own code of conduct. Agencies have additional power to decide which interpreters to engage, with those not selected potentially losing out on working in their local area and forced into other geographic areas and fields of work. It was noted that interpreter-led agencies can be overly political due to their knowledge of the BSL community.

Where agencies win contracts this may mean local freelancers losing work. Interpreters commented that frequently these contracts are won without any prior engagement with local interpreters and without their support. Agencies asking interpreters to hold "provisional bookings" in their diaries is a particularly problematic practice. The concept of "provisional bookings" proved a very contentious subject, but an issue that some said could be eliminated if all the interpreters agreed that they would negotiate how long the booking would be kept in their diaries, if at all.

Comments indicate that many agencies lack the basic competence required to run an effective service. These comments particularly apply to non-specialist agencies and those based outside of Scotland. This incompetence includes passing on incomplete or inaccurate information regarding the bookings. Frequently the details about a booking will not be provided to the interpreter until 48 hours before the booking; including the name of the deaf client. In some cases this results in the interpreter needing to recuse

themselves at the last minute but doing so at such a late stage that it is impossible to find a replacement.

The practice of non-specialist agencies sub-contracting work to other agencies is widely considered to be a waste of public funds.

Preferred agencies

Interpreters expressed a strong preference for working with specialist BSL sector agencies. However, one of the specialist agencies also headed up the list of least preferred agencies, followed by the large corporate non-specialist agencies.

There were mixed views about one specialist BSL agency, as it features as both a preferred and least preferred agency. This agency was perceived by some as being unethical in winning contracts, and caring about profit before staff well-being or the BSL community. Survey responses suggest that this agency has a monopoly on contracts and service level agreements for various public bodies. It was believed that the staff from this agency had interpreted at meetings where the detail of these types of contracts were discussed, which may have given them an advantage over other providers in the tendering process.

Stories indicate that this agency allocates jobs that are not appropriate to individual interpreters and then fails to support them afterwards. The maltreatment of interpreters was cited as a reason not to work for this agency. Others dislike the portal used by the agency.

Respondents consider the large English-based corporate agencies to be profit-driven. Most subcontract, which was felt not to be a good use of public money. Interpreters aired concern about subcontracting, which results in issues about PVG security clearance. It was noted that these agencies are unfamiliar with the geography of Scotland, leading them to make inappropriate requests for work. Interpreters dislike the way agencies all have different ways of invoicing and payment which is time-consuming for them to navigate. It was feared that big agencies do not have the understanding of the job of an interpreter and “they don’t understand what I need as an interpreter.”

There were reports on misleading practices by a number of the large corporate agencies. For example organisations using lists of interpreters from registration websites on their own website and claiming they were staff.

Interpreters’ comments indicate that these agencies do not treat interpreters well, provide insufficient documentation in advance of bookings and can be poor with processing payments.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The implementation of GDPR has had a significant impact on the amount of information provided to interpreters. The reduction in information given to interpreters in advance of a booking has generated a number of problems.

- interpreters appear unprofessional

- interpreters may be allocated inappropriate work
- additional time is wasted

These problems appear to be particularly prevalent for healthcare work. In the past agencies have been able to provide interpreters with all the information they need to make an informed decision about whether or not to accept a booking and to ensure they are fully prepared for the work. Agencies are providing much less of the necessary detail, both at the point of requesting an interpreter and when confirming the booking.

[The NHS in my area] give very little details, could be a date of birth and initials. Sometimes it is nothing.

Agencies are typically using GDPR as an excuse for not providing sufficient information. However, this is leading to real confusion and a waste of human resources when inappropriate interpreters are booked. Sometimes this may be because the patient is a family member or friend, or because the interpreter is not an appropriate gender match for the patient. In other instances it is because the interpreter is unsuitably qualified.

I have had to turn down a job when I get there and find out it is a mental health appointment. I am a trainee.

Respondents report that double booking of interpreters has increased as a result with at least once situation where two appointments were scheduled for the same time, leading the agency to cancel one assuming it to be a duplication, when it was in fact a separate booking. Interpreters are often blamed for these incidents, leading to perceptions of lack of professionalism. When interpreters arrive at a clinic without knowing the name of the patient they are there to interpret for can additionally waste staff time as they investigate who this might be. On some occasions these investigations fail and one respondent related an incident when the reception staff did not know which patient the interpreter was booked to work with. The interpreter waited hoping that they would recognise the patient on arrival but the appointment time passed without anything happening. Later the deaf patient emerged from a consultation room where they had been seen without an interpreter. The interpreter had not only been given no patient name but also an incorrect appointment time.

Interpreters now need to comply with GDPR in relation to their own paperwork with additional steps to be made in their use and storage of information. Interpreters report having to change how they record jobs, including having to amend their spreadsheets to anonymise jobs.

2.6.4 Developing the profession

There is a good deal of survey data that relates to professional development in some way. Discussion of the findings here is divided in to sections on:

- training

- registration
- newly qualified interpreters
- horizontal violence
- continuing professional development and career progression

Participants recognised the challenges associated with the reality of interpreting work and the need for professionals to have the competencies to deal with them. However, it was felt by some that not all professionals are currently well-equipped to do so with a challenge to the profession noted as the lack of skilled interpreters.

The work we do is very difficult, and we might not truly understand that.

Discussion in this section picks up on these challenges and ways of addressing them.

Training

Survey respondents represent the full range of training provision leading to registration. Respondents commented on issues they had experienced with their initial interpreter training. Although over half of the respondents had experienced no particular problems with training, 29 interpreters related a number of issues. The most commonly cited barrier to registration was the limitations of the former SASLI/Heriot-Watt training, which was insufficient to achieve registration with either SASLI or NRCPD. Other reasons pick up on the cost of training and the additional challenge presented by the geography of Scotland or personal circumstances. This may be particularly prohibitive to mature students even when living in the Central Belt as this respondent indicates.

The price to become fully qualified and registered is extraordinary and unachievable for myself.

One barrier to initial interpreter training is that the cost involved can also be calculated on the basis of loss of earnings and time spent travelling. Although the current programme at Heriot-Watt is a popular option, it is only available to those students who are able to commit to four years of full-time study and may therefore be more suitable for school-leavers rather than mature students.

There appears to be a perception amongst some interpreters that those trained through Heriot-Watt University do not stay in Scotland, and therefore places on the programme funded by the Scottish Government via the Scottish Funding Council do not increase the number of interpreters in Scotland. However, this may be a misconception as data provided by Heriot-Watt University indicate that although many of their students do not originate from Scotland, 64% of their graduates remain in Scotland when they complete their training.

Respondents expressed concern about the standards associated with different training provision, advocating a more robust assessment of skills at the point of entry, with ideally applicants already having BSL competence at NVQ Level 6 before being accepted for interpreter training.

You shouldn't be learning the language and the interpreting at the same time.

This is currently a requirement for the NVQ Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting but not for the MA (Hons) programme at Heriot-Watt University. There will always be students on academic and vocational training routes who do not succeed with their interpreter training. Respondents recognised the need for trainers “to be more honest with those who will not make it” and ensure that students are guided towards an alternative exit strategy early in their training.

The quality of training is viewed from an emic perspective by the thirteen survey respondents who indicated that they had not felt ‘ready’ at point of registration. These interpreters represent a variety of routes to the register including five from the Heriot-Watt MA (Hons) programme, three from NVQ programmes, one who completed the SASLI apprenticeship programme and three from the previous Heriot-Watt Certificate course. The remaining respondent’s registration pre-dated the existing qualification structures. It is notable that other respondents from all these training routes expressed readiness at point of registration, although a few expressed mixed views of “yes/no” or “kind of” perhaps indicating that readiness needs to be considered on an individual basis rather than relating to a particular training route.

However, these results suggest that interpreters from all routes to the register can feel unprepared on entering the profession, further supporting the idea of a formal supervisory period and further opportunity to shadow experienced practitioners, as mentioned later in this section. Other comments indicate that even when interpreters feel ‘ready’ this does not apply to all domains of work, with legal settings frequently mentioned as a domain in which people may not feel confident even after working for several years.

I felt ready to enter in the profession but only specific areas. I felt I needed supervision before I decided to start working in other areas that require more experience.

The interpreting landscape is such that most interpreters are self-employed from the moment they register. This is a markedly different landscape from 20 years ago when there were a greater number of employed positions within the third sector. Readiness on entering the profession therefore needs to be viewed in this light.

Registration

Although the majority of respondents (47) indicated that they had not experienced barriers to becoming registered, comments indicate a number of issues that can be problematic. These include the need to complete a second

interpreter training programme when it became apparent that the first course was not fully mapped to the National Occupational Standards for Interpreting (NOS), the criteria for registration changing, SASLI procedures and policies not accepting interpreters formerly registered in other countries. Some interpreters who went through the SASLI system of registration discovered they were not “qualified” at the end because the process was not mapped onto the NOS expected by the NRCPD. This removal of qualified status understandably caused these interpreters a great deal of tension and upset.

Interpreters who qualified via the MA (Hons) programme at Heriot-Watt University and via the SASLI apprenticeship programme also experienced difficulties with SASLI registration. However, registration may be viewed by some through a political lens.

I was advised at Heriot Watt, and by other working interpreters, to register with NRCPD. This became a problem with some agencies who only took interpreters with SASLI membership.

Interpreters reported the importance of being registered with certain bodies in order to get work with agencies. Graduates from Heriot Watt were advised to register with NRCPD but discovered that this was an unpopular choice with some agencies. Some interpreters described having to decide on a registration body based on whether it would enable them to get work.

Some interpreters expressed a desire to only be associated with Scottish organisations, for example SASLI/SRLPDC and local agencies. This was described as “nationalism” by other respondents. Many interpreters who have come from outside Scotland found agencies to be closed shops and some reported being met with prejudice when returning to Scotland following interpreter training undertaken elsewhere. One respondent described the profession here as “a club”.

Although many respondents’ comments indicate a preference for one registration body in Scotland to simplify the landscape, there are contrasting views on which registration body that should be (NRCPD or SASLI/SRLPDC). Some expressed a concern about the future of the interpreting profession in Scotland if SASLI/SRLPDC is not financially supported by the Scottish Government, which is seen as indicating a lack of respect from the Government towards interpreters and the deaf community. This is balanced by more pragmatic comments about the viability of a Scottish register.

Nationalism in Scotland is potentially unhelpful. Having one register would be beneficial. The UK only has 1,100 interpreters. Having a separate body for Scotland makes no sense financially. The Scottish register has always lacked robustness.

There is general consensus for the need of a robust register, with registration for interpreters being essential in order to work in the public sector. This could be enhanced by the registration badge listing post-registration qualifications

and areas of specialism such as legal work and mental healthcare. These details could be listed on the reverse of the registration card, in the same way that a driving licence lists the type of vehicle that the licence holder is permitted to drive.

Newly qualified interpreters (NQIs)

Many of the participants considered the difficulties faced by the newer interpreters in terms of getting and keeping work, and also being able to reject work they feel is beyond them (a vital part of the development of an interpreter).

*There should be a probationary period for novice interpreters.
They are often flung in the deep end.*

Agencies are not making it easy for these interpreters to make professional decisions, insisting that they accept both the jobs they are given and the fees they are offered. It is difficult for the new interpreters to maintain the values they were taught at university without looking idealistic. The fear of upsetting an agency and losing local work may lead to taking too much work in a week or taking work for which they are not ready. Newly qualified interpreters are particularly vulnerable to this. It was noted that interpreters need to be taught how to negotiate their own terms and conditions; training in how to operate as a business was seen as a gap within interpreter training.

It was noted that new interpreters should be seen as co-workers rather than rivals.

It is an exciting time to be an interpreter. But with new interpreters, there needs to be more support. From us. The new people are not competition, they are our future colleagues and co-workers. There is enough work for all of us. We can work it so that the right people can do the right jobs in the Central Belt at least.

Many interpreters expressed the need for a formal system to be established to support newly qualified interpreters (from both vocational and academic routes). The growing demand and supply of BSL/English interpreters in Scotland is perceived as resulting from the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. While this is a positive development it is problematic when newly qualified interpreters are “left to fend for themselves”.

I wish I had more opportunities to shadow people and to find supportive co-workers. I have sometimes asked for feedback from co-workers but not got any. It can be difficult to find supportive and safe environments in which to practice. I would love to have regular supervision from someone I can trust, but there are few people in Scotland I could ask to do this.

Ways in which this support could be delivered therefore include increased opportunity for NQIs to shadow more experienced practitioners, or work

alongside them and mandatory supervision. Having a mentor/supervisor assigned to them for a prescribed duration would necessitate the training of experienced interpreters to take on that role. Such mechanisms need to be sustainable within Scotland but also for the individuals involved, requiring both NQI and mentor/supervisor to be remunerated. Comments suggest that if such a model was successful in Scotland there could be potential for it to be rolled out UK-wide.

The need for nurturing of new professionals is closely connected with the next sub-topic around horizontal violence within the profession, with appropriate support of NQIs seen as a way of alleviating the suspicion and antipathy to new professionals.

Horizontal violence

Horizontal violence refers to hostile or aggressive behaviour towards individuals or groups of individuals. Unfortunately, difficulties with horizontal violence have been reported by many interpreters in our research. Data suggest that though this is a feature of interpreting UK wide, it may be more apparent in Scotland. Fear of losing work to newer interpreters leads to hostility towards training institutions and the graduates of those institutions as well as to those who choose to move to Scotland. Some of this hostility was apparent within the survey data with one interpreter describing the greatest challenge to the landscape as follows:

Trainees / newly qualified interpreters thinking they can do anything. Working with them puts me off. They are heavily dependent on their co-worker.

Another comment picks up on the greatest challenge being the hostility within the progression.

Infighting, disharmony and mistrust. The divide between the “old guard” and novice professionals is horrible. New colleagues are our future.

If the hostility comes from an agency, these newer interpreters find it difficult to source work. Participants expressed concern about new interpreters who become freelance after registration. They considered it important to embrace the new interpreters and see this as an opportunity to be able to match jobs more effectively. Opportunities for newer interpreters to shadow established interpreters were suggested as a way for the profession to become sustainable.

Participants reported politics and abuse of power in agencies; newly qualified interpreters being “torn down” by older interpreters; rivalry between new and established interpreters; “no more backstabbing”; one person said that they had trained for years to become an interpreter, and now that they were qualified and saw how people treated each other, they did not want to be an interpreter any more. One participant described the story of an interpreter who had been forced out of the profession due to unpleasantness from other

interpreters, and receiving no support from their professional body. In response to a question about types of work being done, one interpreter stated that they would not do any work on camera (e.g. recorded, and seen by others) because interpreters are “abusive” about each other.

Rivalry between routes to registration was also cited as a problem. Prejudice was mutually held between those who had gone through an academic route and those who had gone through the NVQ route. Many graduates of the Heriot Watt course felt victimised by agencies and by other interpreters. They found it difficult to get work, even though local work was available, because they were not accepted by the local agency. This results in interpreters having to travel farther afield to find work. It was noted that HWU graduates have more understanding of theory, but their skills vary. It is to be expected that there will be variation, however, two people graduating with the same grade will often differ from each other. Qualifying on graduation was also seen as a problem by established interpreters, who saw that graduates were given an unrealistic idea of their skills. Some refuse to work from BSL into English. Qualified interpreters are mostly happy to support newer colleagues, but not to the extent of doing all the BSL to English in a co-worked assignment. NVQ students were seen to be better known in the community, but they had fewer strategies to cope with the work. It was also noted that they, too, had fewer skills in BSL to English. This appears to be a common gap in skills from both routes. The solution to these issues was seen as having some way to support interpreters post qualification and into early career.

Continuing professional development (CPD) and career progression

There are clearly mixed feelings about the need or value of CPD. The majority of respondents reported that it was important, that it prevents complacency and is rightly mandatory. The value of networking and contact with other interpreters was commonly expressed along with development of professional skills.

I believe anyone who claims to be a professional has a duty to ensure the knowledge and skills they require for their work are developed and kept up to date, as well as to keep abreast of new theories and practices that relate to their professional practice.

There is criticism from some interpreters that others are not motivated to do CPD. Survey data support this, with five respondents openly discussing how they do not wish to engage in CPD, considering it to be unimportant and something that is only engaged with because of registration requirements.

I do not feel that CPD adds value to my practice. I complete the CPD to maintain my registration.

I HATE doing it – it is a real chore.

There were also mixed views about the availability of CPD in Scotland as these responses show.

CPD is an important aspect of our work. There is plenty for me to choose from and something for everyone out there.

It was more common for comments to indicate the challenges in sourcing CPD. Sometimes these challenges could be related to the geography of Scotland while on others related to the sourcing of appropriate training.

Trying to find the number of hours can be difficult and I sometimes have to make up the hours with things that I know aren't actually relevant to my knowledge gaps or learning needs but are all that's available to me

This view is reinforced by another respondent who also noted a less than enthusiastic uptake for organised events.

Lack of decent CPD, and also a lack of interest even when it is set up.

Sourcing suitable CPD is additionally problematic when events are only open to members of a particular body/organisation. Comments indicate that historically SASLI training has not been open to non-members. Given the challenges of provision across Scotland it would be sensible for all training to be openly accessible regardless of organisational affiliation. This is already happening with some provision.

For interpreters in the Central Belt, the limited training available may be the key issue but for those elsewhere in Scotland the cost of CPD training can become prohibitive. Geographic barriers to CPD are far greater than for interpreters in other parts of the UK. For some, attending a training event will require an overnight stay and travel costs in addition to the cost of the training. Many interpreters cited having to pay childcare costs on top, and some had very young children they were not happy to leave overnight. When attending training events in England the expenditure in terms of time, of loss of earnings, transport and accommodation is very high.

Respondents mentioned having seen colleagues leave the profession due to the difficulties sourcing and paying for CPD. Some interpreters have given up their registration because they are unable to get enough interpreting work in order to pay for CPD training which is necessary to maintain registration with NRCPD and SASLI/SRLPDC. One suggestion to alleviate this was to have a sliding scale of CPD requirements based on working hours.

Responses indicate that there is a general perception that CPD is difficult to find, not only in terms of simply accessing local training but also in accessing information about the training available. Several participants reported finding out about training opportunities too late. This would suggest that better dissemination and sharing of information is necessary between the different interpreter organisations in order to maximise uptake of training events.

Comments indicate a preference for more online training, and live-streamed events. There is already a wealth of such provision across the UK which is possibly not widely known about in Scotland.

The CPD provision that is most widely engaged in includes one-day courses, webinars, conferences and supervision/mentoring. Responses indicate an even preference for CPD that is focused on specialist domains and that which is generic. This may reflect the experience levels of different interpreters. A total of 34 respondents said they engaged in some form of supervision. This is quite a high percentage that may reflect varied interpretations of the question, or a potential bias within survey respondents who may be more likely to actively engage in CPD and supervision rather than those who did not respond.

There is a need for training that matches the level of experience of interpreters. Therefore the requirements of NQI and experienced practitioners will differ. It was noted that CPD is more effective when it is planned, informed by reflective practice and not last minute “cramming”, or repeating courses for the points. Having a system which documents both structured and unstructured activities (as required by NRCPD) was applauded by some as it exposed gaps in interpreter knowledge. Others criticised the system as being too rigid. They suggested a more flexible system which recognised the differences between different stages of an interpreter’s career. Some suggested mandatory supervision as part of registration.

Perhaps the motivation to engage in specialist CPD opportunities is stifled by the lack of perceived benefit.

The flat professional structure means that no one feels the need to specialise.

This would indicate that CPD needs to be viewed in relation to wider issues such as the career structure and development of interpreters, which has long been considered problematic. If the structure of the profession changes to allow for career progression, with remuneration that reflects this, then this might promote greater engagement with CPD particularly around areas of specialism or the supervision of novice interpreters.

Training and CPD delivery

The survey asked interpreters if they were involved in the delivery of mentoring and supervision. Responses evidence that only a minority of interpreters are regularly engaged in delivering supervision (7) or mentoring (10). The survey did not ask for detail about these arrangements, but it is likely that some of the ‘supervision’ relates to the supervision of NRCPD regulated trainees or of Heriot-Watt third year students on community placements. Mentoring arrangements are likely to include the mentoring of Heriot-Watt fourth year undergraduates on their interpreting placements.

Twelve interpreters said they were occasionally involved in delivering ad hoc training events, with a further five involved on a more regular basis. Only six

respondents are involved in training that leads towards recognised qualifications.

Only six respondents have some form of teaching or training qualification with eight holding an Assessor qualification and four certified as Internal Verifiers.

2.6.5 Professionalism

The concept of professionalism obviously overlaps with the previous section on professional training, registration and development. This section details survey responses primarily concerning reputation and remuneration.

Reputation

There are two interconnecting issues that emerged from the data as impacting on interpreters' reputation.

- interpreters not attending appointments
- the lack of interpreter availability

Data evidence how agency practices have a direct impact on the reputation interpreters have within the BSL community and in the public sector. For example, the following explanations were provided for the “no show” of interpreters:

- no interpreter was booked in the first place
- bookings were made at the last minute when interpreters were unlikely to be available
- organisations have engaged agencies that do not have contacts within the local interpreting community
- organisations who have not bothered to source an interpreter are making interpreters scapegoats for their lack of action

The earlier section on the problems caused by implementation of GDPR illustrates how the lack of information given to the interpreters before an assignment may impact on perceptions of interpreters' professionalism. Data also evidence that clients are frequently being told that the interpreter either was a “no show” or had to cancel at the last minute. This is usually inaccurate and does not help the relationship between interpreters and their clients. When coupled with the horizontal violence within the profession, there is the potential for agencies to pick up on the misguided fear clients may have that a freelancer may not attend in order to win contracts.

The survey actively addressed the commonly held belief among deaf consumers that interpreters often do not attend appointments, or “had to cancel” at the last minute by asking if interpreters had ever failed to attend without informing the agency that booked them. Overwhelmingly interpreters said that this was not the case. There were instances of double booking, or mistakes, but not without informing the agency. This is in direct contrast with the impression given by agencies, and some public bodies, that interpreters regularly do not attend appointments and that they do so without explanation.

Forty-three of the 69 survey respondents reported deaf clients telling them that interpreters had not turned up for appointments. Given the close relationship between the interpreters and the Deaf Community, these instances of “no show” are often reported to the interpreters, who said they were able to look back at their emails, and could prove that they had not been booked, or even that the job had not been sent to them in the first place, despite the agency giving their name to the deaf person. This phenomenon has previously been described in the Dossier of Disgrace (NUBSLI 2018), noting the damage it does to the relationship between the Deaf community and the interpreting community. Although these comments apply across Scotland there is evidence that they may be felt more keenly by individuals in three particular urban areas and in more rural areas.

Sometimes deaf clients/friends report to interpreters that jobs had not been covered. The interpreter was then able to look back at their emails and see that the job had been advertised very last minute, which perhaps explains that unavailability of interpreters. However, the agency’s emphasis had been on the lack, or the non-attendance, of interpreters rather than the lateness of the call. One interpreter noted the practice of the scapegoating of individual interpreters as the ones who “had to cancel” or did not attend. Again, although these reports come from across the country, NHS bookings are mentioned frequently, with two NHS Boards in urban areas noted as particularly problematic.

It seems unlikely that interpreters would simply not attend a booking, given how responses indicate “that most interpreters would rather cut off their right arm than miss an appointment.”

I hear this all the time from clients and friends. There is a particular favourite phrase used by agencies when they pretend they have booked interpreters then have to come clean. "The interpreter had to cancel". Given that most freelance interpreters would rather cut off their own arm than cancel, the frequency with which this excuse is given to Deaf people is alarming. There is also the charming practice where a specific interpreter is requested, the agency take the booking then do not contact the named interpreter but go back to the client saying that person is not available but we can provide you with someone equivalent. This has happened to many of my colleagues and myself over the years and is a form of control: control of the Deaf community and the interpreting communities.

However, for interpreters in areas where there are few interpreters, on occasions conflicting demand result in them having to prioritise one booking over another, with the one involving the greater risk (usually NHS) being given priority.

Where interpreters have now been directly employed by the NHS there still appear to be problems.

I hear that Deaf people are regularly going to NHS appointments in [one area] and that they are being told that interpreters are not turning up. At times their appointments are being rescheduled several times before they are being seen. Others are reporting that trainee interpreters are in attendance at assignments they believe should be undertaken by registered interpreters. Some are now choosing to take family members with them to support them rather than run the gauntlet of there being no interpreter present.

Other respondents mentioned an insecurity felt by deaf people about whether or not an interpreter would be in attendance at their healthcare appointments. It is now more difficult for deaf clients to check this information; made more difficult when lengthy booking chains are involved.

Remuneration

Remuneration of interpreters needs to reflect the cost of working as an interpreter. The expenses interpreters incur include the annual cost of registration, the cost of CPD activities and, the cost of operating on a self-employed basis. For those interpreters engaging in Access to Work bookings they may also need to factor in travel costs which cannot be charged directly. Respondents also discussed the need for recompense for the outlay involved in their initial interpreter training and route to registration.

Survey responses indicate that non-payment of interpreters' fees is a real problem with 19 respondents directly impacted and one respondent was owed £2,000. The most frequently mentioned bodies responsible for non-payment include the DWP (for Access to Work bookings), solicitors, private hospitals, counselling services, low budget "accessible" events, education and museums. Problems with AtW bookings are generated by a variety of issues including lost invoices, the deaf client not submitting invoices to the DWP, and errors within the AtW system. In other situations, complications can arise due to the length of the booking chain.

Interpreters additionally experience problems with organisations who do not pay on time with 37 respondents indicating that they had been affected by this. Sometimes payments are so frequently late that interpreters cease working for that organisation or taking repeat bookings. These organisations include interpreting agencies.

One problem encountered with work in Further Education is the withholding of payment when a student is absent, with the interpreter's payment shifted to a different booking time, rather than paying for both the cancelled lesson and the newly scheduled one.

Unpaid work

Fifty-eight of the 69 respondents indicated that they undertook some work on a voluntary basis. This unpaid work fell into a number of different categories although majority relate to bookings in religious settings. Interpreting at funerals is the most frequent unpaid work with 20 respondents indicating that

they work at these events without pay. Interpreters also work voluntarily at a variety of other predominantly social events or when helping deaf friends with phone calls or informal appointments.

LGBT organisations were mentioned as expecting pro bono work or relying on the AtW budgets of attendees. Respondents also noted that when agencies provide volunteer interpreters this can lead to an expectation of voluntary interpreting as the norm.

2.6.6 Summary

Many of the points raised by the participants are common across the UK and extend to the interpreting profession in other countries. The issues particularly pertinent to Scotland were linked to the distances covered by interpreters for their work as well as initial training provision and CPD activities. The geography of Scotland proves as problematic for interpreters as it does for interpreting provision, with interpreters based in more rural areas far less secure in their ability to attract work or be paid for their travel. These same interpreters reported feelings of guilt when working outside of their region, due to leaving their community without cover. Distances are also problematic when trying to attract new interpreters into the profession as they create a barrier to attending training delivered within the Central Belt.

Responses indicate a high level of insecurity within the profession. This appears to be generated from various sources and manifests in several ways. One is the “nationalism” associated with registration. SASLI registered interpreters expressed insecurity about their potential loss of status should Scottish Government funding cease, with a negative impact on the number of interpreters in Scotland. Despite the fear of losing status, reluctance was shown by SASLI registered interpreters to have to shift registration to another organisation (NRCPD).

Further insecurity is generated through the potential loss of local work should online interpreting provision be favoured by the public sector. This could have the detrimental result of diminishing local availability for work that requires face-to-face interpreting.

Some of the insecurity interpreters expressed relates to their reliance on agencies for work. In some cases, individuals are having to make choices about registration on the basis of the likelihood of working with certain agencies. Agencies are perceived as exercising power, including the power to determine who is allocated work. Some agencies were acknowledged as not understanding the geography, nor the deaf community of Scotland. Decisions about interpreters and interpreting without consulting interpreters were nevertheless being made by these agencies. Outdated models of interpreting are inadvertently being used to inform policies by many agencies. Such models do not serve the community. Some agencies also exercise their power through the payment of some registered interpreters on lower trainee rates. Respondents reported the potential abuse of power where conflict of

interest goes un-recognised. For example, when interpreters who run agencies are involved in interpreting meetings where provision of interpreting services and public sector contracts are discussed.

There is concern within the profession around the standard of work associated with registered status. Interpreters coming through Heriot Watt are identified to be better versed in theory than practice, and the NVQ students better at practice than theory. One area of agreement is the need for formal support of all newly qualified interpreters. Establishing this provision can be tied into the CPD of existing interpreters to enable them to maintain their own skills and share their expertise with others.

Interpreters' responses indicate a continued need for those who work with interpreters to appreciate why use of registered interpreters is essential and to better understand how interpreters work. Interpreters are still educating public sector clients about the inappropriateness of expecting a BSL user to lipread or to read and write notes. The NHS in particular appears to be reluctant to "resort" to working with an interpreter, citing expense as the reason for avoiding doing so. However, the education of deaf users of interpreting services is also important. This would be most appropriately delivered to deaf pupils in high school prior to entering further education or the workplace. This Review highlights a lack of interpreting provision for young deaf people outside of education. Further exploration of barriers to interpreting provision for young people in healthcare in particular might be valuable.

Best use of public funding demands sustainable approaches that ensure training produces profession-ready interpreters. Interpreters expressed concern that current training provision may not be achieving this at present. It is challenging to ensure that student interpreters are ready for a predominantly self-employed workforce, suggesting that additional support for newly qualified professionals would be helpful to embed them successfully into professional practice. This should additionally help address the tendency for over-working and the potential to burn out and leave the profession prematurely.

One solution to many of these issues, suggested by many interpreters, is for the creation of a more equitable way to advertise and fulfil bookings. Some form of central online portal would represent much better value to the taxpayer, as this would negate the need for agency costs and, if well designed, could also promote the deployment of local interpreters, thus reducing excessive travel costs.

3. Conclusion

The research undertaken for this Landscape Review brings together various perspectives around the provision of BSL/English interpreting in Scotland. This unique study helps create a holistic picture of the current landscape. It has revealed particular challenges faced by the different stakeholders involved and helps identify areas where action is required.

It is evident from earlier reports on projects related to BSL/English interpreting in Scotland that the Scottish Government has already invested a large amount of money into the profession. The value of this extensive investment is questionable, the only sustainable outcome being the MA (Hons) programme now running at Heriot-Watt University. Despite this funding the BSL/English interpreting profession is no more advanced in Scotland than it is elsewhere in the UK, and in some ways is less well provisioned.

Going forward therefore, it is essential that any Scottish Government spend is used more effectively, in a transparent and sustainable way. Whatever systems are put in place must be designed to ensure the sustainability of the profession, which is essential to ensure that both deaf and hearing consumers receive a quality interpreting service. This will require greater collaboration between stakeholders and within the interpreting profession.

A number of the issues raised within this review concern Access to Work provision. This scheme is not in the remit of the Scottish Government, and it is likely that little action can be taken directly on this. However, the report can be shared more widely and it is hoped that the DWP use this report as evidence of some of the problems faced by the BSL community and the interpreters who work with them.

One theme within the interpreters' responses appears to be an underlying insecurity in their work. This manifests itself in concern over the sustainability of work, losing work to other interpreters, the "moving goalposts" of interpreter registration and the perception of poor professional standards. The changing procurement environment certainly contributes to the real insecurity experienced by many. It is likely that insecurity may have impacted on the response rate to the survey, as it became evident that the Landscape Review has been viewed with suspicion by some interpreters.

There are areas where concern is shared quite broadly across the different perspectives, and others that are exclusive to one group or another. The detail of the data is contained in Section 2 of this report. This conclusion highlights some of the key issues that emerge, which lead on to the recommendations from this report.

3.1 Areas of Commonality

Areas of commonality revolve around three intersecting themes.

3.1.1 Availability

There is widespread concern around the inequity of BSL/English interpreting provision around Scotland. Some areas are poorly served by interpreters and in others there are no locally-based interpreters at all. This leads to lack of provision, lack of choice and, increased anxiety amongst both the BSL community and public bodies that serve them. Even in areas such as the Central Belt, where interpreter provision is greater, there is still a challenge in sourcing interpreters with appropriate skills for certain types of work.

Use of agencies might be perceived to extend reach to a greater number of interpreters, but this is not always the case. Some agencies only work with select interpreters and many interpreters only work with selected agencies. Booking via agencies can therefore diminish the reach to potential interpreters rather than increase it.

3.1.2 Consistency

Concerns around standards and professionalism come from both inside and outside the interpreting profession, with a desire for greater consistency between different routes to registration. There is also a need for transparency and impartiality over registration processes and for registration bodies to implement robust policies and procedures to which the BSL community has access.

Greater consistency in the fees and terms and conditions of interpreters would be welcomed by consumers. However, this needs to be balanced with an understanding that a differential fee structure would better reflect the skills/experience levels of novice and experienced interpreters.

The standard and consistency of provision of BSL translation has become an important focus, given the increase in translation work resulting from the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

3.1.3 Sustainability

Although increasing the number of interpreters would be beneficial, the existing workforce could be used more effectively. Current procurement arrangements within the public sector are proving increasingly problematic and are inappropriate for the delivery of BSL/English interpreting. These systems disadvantage interpreters, public bodies and the BSL community alike. The increased length of the 'booking chain' is highly problematic, often

making it impossible to detect at what point along the chain mistakes occur. Current systems are overly time-consuming, add little or no value to the service and are prohibitively expensive. Tendering processes favour corporate bidders rather than the third sector specialist agencies that are more likely to have close connections with their local BSL communities. Some private sector companies are profiting greatly, while working conditions for interpreters deteriorate and public money is wasted. Furthermore, most interpreters prefer to source work direct from clients rather than via agencies. Urgent action is required to ensure that public money is spent more effectively.

The BSL/English interpreting profession needs to be structured in a way that is more supportive of trainee and novice interpreters, but also recognises the value and expertise of more experienced practitioners with specialist skills in order to retain them within the profession.

There is a need for more appropriately trained and qualified BSL tutors across Scotland. Having a nationwide network of tutors would help ensure that BSL was taught more widely, encouraging people in all areas to learn the language and potentially to go on to interpreter training. This in turn could help towards ensuring a wider coverage by interpreters in the future.

3.2 Areas of Discrepancy

There are few areas where perceptions diverge completely, and where this occurs it is generally a difference between the perceptions of the public sector and the other stakeholders involved.

3.2.1 Employment

There are different perspectives around employment of interpreters in the public sector with a growing number of NHS Boards that are looking to employ their own in-house staff. Data from this research indicate the risks involved in this, particularly when less experienced interpreters are employed without due supervision and monitoring of their work. The motivation of the NHS Boards to employ their own staff is understandable given the issues relating to booking interpreters raised in this study, but recommendations from this report propose alternative solutions.

3.2.1 Perceptions and expectations

The different data sets from this research illustrate the alternative stories concerning interpreters' professionalism. A common complaint is interpreters not arriving for appointments. While this may sometimes be a genuine issue, data evidence how the length of booking chains is frequently responsible for communication breakdowns. Sometimes an individual interpreter is blamed by agencies, when they had not actually been booked. This impacts on the perceptions of interpreters by both deaf and hearing clients.

Expectations of interpreters and interpreting are not necessarily shared by public bodies and the BSL community. Further education around how to work with interpreters would be beneficial, particularly to younger members of the BSL community.

Expectations differ over interpreters' fees. Few consumers take into account the self-employed status of the majority of interpreters and the effort and cost that goes into maintaining professional registration and standards. However, interpreters need to recognise that their fees should reflect the standard of their work, including preparation for individual bookings and CPD to ensure maintenance of skills.

3.2.3 Online interpreting

The BSL community do not favour online interpreting provision (VRS or VRI). Data from the Review evidences its use in highly inappropriate situations. Public bodies understandably view online interpreting as a more accessible and cost effective way of provision. In so doing they may not appreciate that online communication is uncomfortable, or impossible, for some people to

engage with. It is also inappropriate in situations where critical, emotive or sensitive issues are discussed.

3.3 Possible Resolutions

There is a real need for resolutions to these challenges in the light of increasing demand for interpreters across the public sector. Increased demand is a positive development that appears to have been influenced by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, but which demands a rethink of the current situation, or ‘institutionalisation of interpreting services’ (de Meulder and Haualand 2019). Current arrangements are not serving the BSL community effectively across the country, nor are they proving to be value for money for the public sector or sustainable for the interpreting profession. The situation in Scotland does however present a real opportunity to address the status quo and deliver more effective provision of interpreting that would be more problematic if tackled on a UK-wide scale. This report signposts a real opportunity to purposefully shape the future landscape to ensure it works for the benefit of the BSL community and the public sector that serves them.

Solutions come under the general headings of effective deployment and a sustainable and transparent professional structure, with many solutions intersecting and requiring a cohesive approach to ensure success.

3.3.1 Effective deployment

Although increasing the number of interpreters in Scotland would be beneficial, data from this review suggest that better use could be made of the existing interpreting workforce. More effective deployment of interpreters could be achieved through a number of initiatives such as a centralised booking system and the potential employment of a small number of interpreters.

A centralised booking system could provide a cost effective means of easily identifying interpreters’ availability, locality and the appropriate skillset. It would additionally promote greater transparency over interpreter fees. Such a system would facilitate a more direct link from booker to interpreter, to ensure that interpreters receive the information they require.

The employment of a centralised interpreting team would mitigate the geographical inequalities currently experienced by those living in more rural areas and help address the demand for ad hoc bookings in all areas. Such an employment system could form part of the supportive framework for newly qualified interpreters and contribute to the career progression of more experienced interpreters moving into supervisory roles.

A longer term solution will be to increase the number of BSL tutors across the country. This strategy would help address the geographic deficit of interpreters outside the Central Belt. Although to achieve this will require further training and qualifications to be put in place, the outcome will not only increase the reach and number of interpreters but also boost employment within the BSL community. Further benefit to the BSL community would also be achieved through provision of suitable training and qualification for those wishing to work as BSL translators.

Meanwhile, a review of existing framework agreements and procurement arrangements is essential to ensure standards are maintained and best value for money from the public purse. Guidance to public bodies and agencies over the problems generated by legislation such as GDPR and IR35 would also help mitigate some of the current difficulties.

Further guidance is required around the use of online interpreting provision. Decisions around the implementation of online interpreting need to be informed by research and driven by the BSL community rather than the public sector.

Training of the BSL community in how to work with interpreters would be most easily delivered at high schools. This would help equip deaf pupils with the knowledge they require to effectively move on to tertiary education or the work place.

Interpreters need to be motivated to engage in meaningful CPD to maintain and extend their skills, and to appreciate initial interpreter education is insufficient to ensure ongoing professional development. This would be facilitated if differential pay grades (potentially linked to a revised registration structure) became the expectation. Financial recognition of specialist skills would also encourage more interpreters into areas of work such as justice, mental healthcare, and working with tactile BSL.

3.3.2 Sustainable and transparent professional structure

The broader UK experience suggests that government funding of registration or membership associations is unnecessary. Although it may not be possible to immediately agree on one registration body operating in Scotland, there are ways to mitigate the confusion extant with NRCPD and SASLI/SRLPDC at present. These would include greater parity of registration processes between the two organisations.

The creation of a career framework for interpreters incorporating financial recognition of interpreting specialisms would help retain interpreters in the profession, particularly if reinforced by additional qualifications/assessments. These specialisms could include the additional responsibilities of providing

mentoring/supervision to NQIs and trainees. Such a career structure, combined with financial recognition, would help alleviate some of the antagonism felt towards NQIs who are currently able to charge the same rates as experienced practitioners. The support system would also help mitigate the impact of NQIs working on a self-employed basis immediately on achieving registered status.

4. Recommendations

Data from the Landscape Review lead towards the recommendations detailed in this Section.

Data indicate that it is crucial that the solution to current challenges is not seen as being simply to increase the number of BSL/English interpreters in Scotland. Although an increase in numbers would certainly be beneficial, a longer-term solution needs to be to ensure that existing BSL/English interpreters are deployed effectively is essential. This will remain a necessity even when interpreter numbers increase.

The underlying principle behind these recommendations is to ensure sustainability of the BSL/English interpreting profession in Scotland, the health of the profession and to address some of the geographic inequalities that currently exist for the BSL community. These recommendations therefore relate to interpreting professionals and interpreting stakeholders as well as the Scottish Government and the Public Bodies within Scotland. In many cases the actions necessary to deliver on these recommendations will require a collaborative approach. An approach that draws different stakeholders together in order to improve the landscape of BSL/English interpreting will be the most effective of achieving the ultimate goal of ensuring the BSL community has the access they need.

These recommendations cover the lifespan of interpreting careers, from interpreter training, the regulation of interpreters on to the continuing development of registered professionals. They also cover the way interpreting services are procured and delivered.

The recommendations resulting from the Landscape Review research are as follows:

1. A review of the use existing public sector framework agreements and procurement arrangements is required to ensure the maintenance of standards and best value for public money.
2. Consideration of the central employment of a small team of interpreters to help cover areas where there is currently little, or no, interpreting provision. A model such as that used by the Scottish Legal Aid Board (for duty solicitors) could be adopted.
3. Reducing the length of the 'booking chain' for public bodies. This should include investigating the creation of a central information and booking system to be used across the public sector. Such a system would need to be very carefully designed to ensure it meets the needs of interpreters, service users and the public sector. It would be

essential for any system to be fully supported and used across the public sector and with the engagement of all interpreting practitioners.

4. National guidance on the appropriate use of online interpreting services that is based on research evidence and incorporates the views of the BSL community.
5. Guidance on the implementation of GDPR in relation to interpreting bookings, particularly in the health sector, to ensure that interpreters have sufficient information to make informed judgements about accepting bookings and preparing for them.
6. Creation of a formal system for the support of trainee/newly qualified interpreters that would involve mentoring and supervision by more experienced and suitably trained practitioners. This would additionally require appropriate training and support mechanisms be put in place for the mentors/supervisors.
7. Greater recognition of the specialist skills of more experienced interpreting practitioners, which should be recognised through differential rates of pay where appropriate, helping to create a career structure for interpreters.
8. Homogenisation of the colours of registration cards for the two registration bodies operational in Scotland (NRCPD and SASLI/SRLPDC) in order to reduce confusion to consumers.
9. Any Scottish registration body will need to reassure stakeholders that they operate with appropriate levels of transparency and impartiality, as demonstrated by NRCPD.
10. Greater collaboration between academic and vocational training providers to ensure that students in both routes benefit from both theoretical and practical experience prior to registration.
11. Development of a sustainable training pathway and qualification for BSL tutors to increase the number of BSL tutors across Scotland, and particularly to encourage more to teach more advanced levels of BSL. The ideal delivery would facilitate participation from BSL users living in more remote areas of Scotland.
12. A national programme of training for BSL pupils of high school age on how to work with interpreters, particularly in relation to further study and job interviews.
13. Interpreters to be represented and involved in all future consultations and planning relating to the implementation of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

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