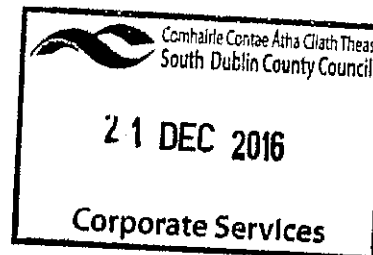




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OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Mr Colm Murphy
Meetings Administrator
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24



Reference : M20/1116
Minister Reference: 1206144254

19 December, 2016

Dear Mr Murphy,

I refer to recent correspondence from you regarding recognition of Irish Sign Language (ISL).

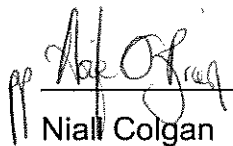
There are approximately 5,000 users of ISL in the State, and it is fair and appropriate that public services provide interpretation services for this group – at no cost - when questions of statutory entitlement are at issue.

In this regard, the Department of Justice and Equality will shortly be putting a new National Disability Inclusion Strategy in place that contains a specific action to create a statutory right for a person to receive free ISL interpretation services when availing of statutory services. I am of the firm view that this is the best approach to meeting the needs of the Deaf community, and that this service will make a real difference in the lives of ISL users.

Furthermore, extensive interpretation services for deaf people on a state-wide basis are provided by the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS), which was established by the Citizens Information Bureau (CIB) in 2007, and it is my intention to build on the existing excellent support the CIB provides for the provision of interpretation services.

In relation to the *Recognition of Irish Sign Language for the Deaf Community Bill 2016*, the Government has not opposed the Bill, which passed Second Stage in the Seanad on 19 October 2016. The Bill now needs to complete the pre-legislative scrutiny phase, after which discussions on amendments to the Bill can begin.

Yours sincerely



Niall Colgan

Private Secretary to the Tánaiste
and Minister for Justice and Equality