

Evaluation of SLIS National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) actions

Final Report

October 2022

Ann Clarke

Tom Martin





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“The new structure would facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach, based on the value of ‘Nothing about us, without us’, to address priorities highlighted in the evidence base.”

Rónán Lowry,

Chairperson, Sign Language Interpreting Services

October 2022

The Minister of State with special responsibility for Disability Issues, Finian McGrath T.D., launched the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) in July 2017. Among the first issues he identified were four measures tasked to Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) to enhance the access for Deaf citizens to interpreting services. He asserted *“the initiatives, when they have moved off the pages of a document and become the established way of doing things, have the capacity to significantly impact on the way in which services support people with disabilities”*.

This Evaluation Report of the SLIS NDIS Actions evidences progress to those goals, namely:

- ▶ Irish Remote Interpretation Service (IRIS) has been expanded to evenings and weekends, with more interpreters employed to enhance access of the Deaf and hearing communities to everyday services;
- ▶ SLIS researched, consulted and supported the establishment of a quality-assurance and registration scheme for interpreters, set up under a separate company known as Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI), and a register of sign language interpreters was published on the 23rd December 2020, in time for the implementation of the Irish Sign Language (ISL) Act 2017.
- ▶ The success of the *Social Inclusion Voucher Scheme* pilot phase shines a light on the way to establish a permanent scheme, which has unfortunately yet to take shape to meet the requirements of the ISL Act section 9.

▶ The action to increase the availability of sign language interpreters was more challenging. The training and certification of Deaf interpreters through Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) in Trinity College Dublin (TCD) resulted in an increase in the number of Deaf interpreters to 22 of the 112 sign language interpreters on the register. However, the availability of ISL / English Sign language interpreters remains insufficient to meet the daily needs of Ireland's Deaf and hearing communities. SLIS commissioned research to identify actions needed and accepted them in a position paper, but progress requires a level of collaboration and planning that is not currently present. This Evaluation recommends that a multi-partner approach should be a goal in the coming years.

▶ Another concern is the resourcing of SLIS to provide “ongoing professional training and development”. The funding and provision of a calendar of CPD short courses in 2021 was very successful. The absence of such a programme of supports in 2022 raises risks about supporting quality of the levels of interpreting that are available. This Evaluation Report clearly recommends to “Resource provision of a structured programme of CPD delivered by SLIS”.

I thank the evaluators, Tom Martin and Ann Clarke, for their diligent analysis in outlining the context for the study, their consultative methodology, and robust work in detailing the challenges, as well as evidencing the successes on the difficult journey of turning policy statements on a page into an everyday reality for Ireland's Deaf community.

Thanks are also due to the Citizens Information Board (CIB) and the Department of Social Protection (DSP) as the main funders and to the CIB staff. However, there were some complex challenges during the NDIS phase as there is much more work to do, particularly in terms of implementation of policies and legislation. We hope to see these challenges reflected in the strategic plans and emerging governance arrangements in the coming year(s).

I work closely with a committed Board of SLIS Directors and the team of SLIS. Special thanks are due to them, as well as our stakeholders, including the Irish Deaf Society (IDS), Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Council of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (CISLI), Chime, National Disability Authority (NDA), and all interpreters, service providers and especially the Deaf users of SLIS Services.

I fully agree with the evaluation findings that a change in the funding model of service provision is needed, and this should move from a welfare basis to an equality model, as recognised by the funders of SLIS in the Periodic Critical Review (PCR) of CIB (May 22) by the DSP.

The new structure would facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach, based on the value of **'Nothing about us, without us'**, to address priorities highlighted in the evidence base.

I list these as

- ▶ The establishment of a permanent Social Inclusion Voucher Scheme is urgently needed.
- ▶ Consistent resourcing of the national remote interpreting service IRIS, to introduce new technology and an IRIS App to allow for on-demand interpreting access.
- ▶ Security of staff working in the provision of interpreting services, including IRIS and the SLIS referral services (GP access scheme, funerals, 24/7 emergency service, referrals and access supports).
- ▶ A commitment to equality for Deaf citizens and to supporting Deaf-led responses.

Finally, the evaluation reflects that SLIS has a committed, flexible and dynamic team. I would like to acknowledge their contribution to reducing the inequalities Deaf people continue to face in Ireland today.

About Sign Language Interpreting Service

Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) is the national organisation for sign language interpreting in Ireland. We provide a range of interpreting services to both individuals and organisations. We also advocate for the right to Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreting services, and lead on the development of infrastructure for the sector. Founded in 2007, we are supported and funded by the Citizens Information Board. www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Our Vision

All Deaf people live as full and equal citizens.

Our Mission

To advocate for, develop, and make available, quality interpreting services to Deaf people and service providers in Ireland.

SLIS is headquartered at Deaf Village Ireland, which is based in Cabra, Dublin.

SLIS Strategic plan 2020-2024 objectives

1. Develop and expand IRIS - the Irish Remote Interpreting Service - to improve communication and access between Deaf and hearing people in Irish society.
2. To reduce barriers faced by Deaf people in exercising their rights to sign language interpreting
3. To support sign language interpreters to provide quality interpreting to all.
4. SLIS will put a Registration and Quality Assurance scheme in place for Sign Language Interpreters.
5. To conduct our work with integrity and with an unwavering commitment to Deaf people.

About Citizens Information Board (CIB)

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services. CIB supports the network of Citizens Information Centres, Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), the National Advocacy Service and the Citizens Information Phone Service. Governed by the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008, the Citizens Information Act 2007 and the Comhairle Act 2000, the Citizens Information Board comes under the remit of the Department of Social Protection.



Introduction

Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) is the national sign language interpreting service for Ireland. It was set up to promote, represent, advocate and ensure the availability of quality Sign Language interpretation services to Deaf people in Ireland.

SLIS was tasked with a number of actions under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (NDIS)¹. The SLIS 2021 action plan agreed with the Citizens Information Board (CIB) has a specific action to evaluate progress to date on the SLIS NDIS actions. This report is the outcome.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for this study were to prepare an evaluation report based on qualitative and quantitative data collection and on statistical reporting and outcomes achieved during the period of the NDIS 2017-2021.

The report would include the following:

- ▶ An introduction to the NDIS SLIS actions.
- ▶ A summary review of selected key documents (e.g. NDIS plan and reports available, Irish Sign Language Act, evaluations and research reports).
- ▶ A report of progress, outcomes, achievements and gaps, to include quantitative statistics and a qualitative analysis of progress.
- ▶ An analysis of stakeholder feedback.
- ▶ Conclusions and recommendations.

Methodology

The methodology encompassed a review of documentation and statistics on the NDIS actions for which SLIS was responsible and consultation with key stakeholders.

The research team reviewed data on remote Sign Language interpreting and other services provided by SLIS to the Deaf community. They also studied relevant documentation, including evaluation reports.

Consultations were held with the SLIS chairperson and other Board members, the SLIS manager and staff involved in NDIS projects, the CIB, the NDIS Project Steering Group, interpreters and members of the Council of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (CISLI), the Irish Deaf Society, Chime, the Deaf community including people who use SLIS services, the Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) in Trinity College Dublin and the Register of the Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI).

Stakeholders were invited to use a 'traffic light' system of Green, Orange and Red to score progress for each of the NDIS actions and to comment on the reasons for their score. The stakeholders were given the option of scoring an action at a mid-point, e.g. Green/Orange². Data gathered by SLIS was also reviewed to ascertain trends along with process information.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Board of SLIS, members of the NDIS Projects Steering Group, SLIS and IRIS staff, CISLI, interpreters, RISLI, CDS, CIB and members of the Deaf community who gave so generously of their time to provide insights for this evaluation.

¹ In 2021, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced that the NDIS 2017-2021 would be extended for an additional year.

² The following weighting system (Green = 5; Green/Orange = 4; Orange = 3; Orange/Red = 2; Red = 1) was used to compute stakeholders' mean score for the five actions.



Context

Sign Language Interpreters

Irish Sign Language is the primary means of communication used by between 5,000 and 6,000 members of the Deaf community in the Republic of Ireland³. However, the supply of Irish Sign Language interpreters has been inadequate to meet demand from the Deaf community and service providers for quite some time, contributing to further marginalisation of the Deaf community⁴. In 2017, SLIS identified a national skills shortage for sign language interpreting⁵. In 2019, it estimated that there were between 80 and 90 practising sign language interpreters working in Ireland, with half working part-time⁶. As of June 2022, there are over 110 hearing and Deaf interpreters on the Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters.

Irish Sign Language Act

The Irish Sign Language Act (2017) officially recognises Irish Sign Language. The Act commenced in December 2020. It recognises Irish Sign Language as a native language and protects the right of Irish Sign Language users to preserve and develop it. The Act places a duty on public bodies to provide Irish Sign Language users with free interpretation when availing of statutory entitlements and services. There are specific duties set out in respect of legal proceedings, education and broadcasting. The Act also includes sections regarding the engagement of verified competent Irish Sign Language Interpreters (Section 7) and support for access to events, services and activities for users of

Irish Sign Language (Section 9). These duties will increase the demand for Irish Sign Language interpreters in the coming years.

SLIS Strategy

SLIS is funded by the Department of Social Protection through CIB. Its mission is to ensure the Deaf community can live as full and equal citizens. It promotes and advocates for the availability of quality sign language interpretation services for Deaf people and service providers. It has a range of services, including referral to registered interpreters, operation of the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS), arranging interpreters for GP appointments for medical card/GP visit card-holders, access to emergency out of hours' interpretation and a social fund for funerals.

SLIS's strategy commits to working in collaboration with the CIB and Deaf organisations to ensure Irish Sign Language interpreting rights remain a priority in policy-making and service provision, and specifically in the development of a new National Disability Inclusion Strategy. Its strategy also commits to establishing a national register of sign language interpreters. The SLIS vision is that Deaf people live as full and equal citizens, and the strategy is guided by the value *"Nothing about us without us"*.

³ Leeson, L., Venturi, L., 2017, A review of Literature and International Practice on National and Voluntary Registers for Sign Language Interpreters, TCD and SLIS.

⁴ Government Publications, 2016, The Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality Report on the Formal Recognition of Irish Sign Language.

⁵ <http://slis.ie/wp-assets-slisis/uploads/2018/06/SLIS-position-paper-A-national-skill-shortage-in-sign-language-interpreting-270117.docx>

⁶ Cruinn Associates, 2019, Strategic Framework to Increase the Availability and Quality of Sign Language Interpreting in Ireland, SLIS.

CIB Strategy

SLIS is one of a number of services that is supported and funded by the CIB. Other services include Citizens Information Services, the Money Advice & Budgeting Service and the National Advocacy Service. The CIB Strategic Plan 2019-2021 had three strategic priorities in respect of its services: enhancing service quality and availability; service development and innovation; building capacity.

Periodic Critical Review of CIB

A Periodic Critical Review (PCR) of CIB by the Departments of Social Protection (DSP) and Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) commenced in 2021. The DPER Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies requires that non-commercial public bodies be subject to a PCR no later than every five years. The PCR considers performance against the original mandate of the body and the changing external environment to identify scope for improvement.

The CIB review was undertaken by officials in the DSP. A project Working Group was established to inform and oversee the practical conduct of the review and consisted of representatives from the DSP, DPER, and CIB Board and Executive. The review was published in July 2022.

The PCR report notes that CIB delivers much of its mandate through 22 independent Service Delivery Companies (SDCs), including SLIS and RISLI. It says SLIS provides Irish Sign Language interpreting services to ensure that the Deaf community can access public and social services and exercise their rights and entitlements under the Equal Status and Disability Acts and the Irish Sign Language Act.

The review stated that the SLIS function was assigned to CIB by the Minister for Social Protection as provided for under Section 7(j) of the Comhairle Act. It noted that SLIS's remit had expanded substantially since its inception, most notably in 2017 when it was tasked under the NDIS to provide a quality assurance and registration scheme for interpreters and ongoing professional training and development. This subsequently led to the establishment of RISLI as a separate company.

The review found that this expanded remit had presented challenges for CIB. It said that the CIB Executive and Board had noted that quality assurance and responsibility for professional training and development were outside the core expertise of its staff. In addition, there was a discomfort with the responsibility for oversight of a de-facto regulatory body

outside the scope of their expertise. It was suggested that other agencies or Departments might be a more suitable home for this function.

The PCR report recommended that the DSP and CIB consider the oversight and support role CIB currently fulfils over SLIS and RISLI in the context of how these companies have developed and review how best the governance of these two important service companies might be overseen.

National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2022

The NDIS aims to support people with disabilities to take part in their local communities and to ensure that government departments, public bodies and other groups work together. It has 114 actions covering equality and choice, joined-up policies and public sector, education, employment, health and wellbeing, person-centred services, living in the community, transport and accessible places.

NDIS objectives include 'Appropriate accommodations and resources are in place to ensure people who communicate in different ways can participate as equal citizens'. Key deliverables to meet this objective were extending remote interpreting hours to evenings and weekends and resourcing SLIS to increase the number of trained Sign Language and Deaf interpreters, putting in place a quality assurance and registration scheme for interpreters and providing ongoing professional training and development for interpreters. The NDIS committed to resource SLIS to achieve certain actions⁷.

The NDIS tasked SLIS specifically with the following:

- ▶ Extending the hours of Irish Sign Language remote interpretation service to evenings and weekends.
- ▶ Increasing the number of trained Sign Language and Deaf Interpreters.
- ▶ Putting in place a registration and quality assurance scheme for interpreters.
- ▶ Providing ongoing professional training and development.

NDIS Projects Steering Group

To support implementation of SLIS NDIS actions, the CIB and SLIS set up the NDIS Projects Steering Group⁸ on 1st October 2020 to provide oversight, strategic direction and identify priority actions over the period of the 2017-2022 NDIS. The Steering Group includes representatives from SLIS, CIB, CDS, CISLI, National Disability Authority, and the Irish Deaf Society. A draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group was tabled at the first meeting in October 2020. The document outlined the Group's functions, scope, membership, duration, decision taking, and review. The Terms of Reference also specified that in relation to reporting, the relevant person or representative of the Steering Group would report regularly to the SLIS Board and CIB.

Also, at that first meeting, the CIB representative stated that key NDIS actions for which the Group had responsibility would be delivered through a combined effort. Furthermore, success would ultimately rely on stakeholder engagement and input. Therefore, the Steering Group would be vital to achieving sustainability of interpreting services. Additionally, they said a robust evaluation of all projects would be integral to any submissions to Government to secure funding beyond the NDIS.

A challenge to the efficient running of the Steering Group has, however, been intermittent attendance by CIB representatives and the absence of a clear reporting structure to either the SLIS Board or CIB to get decisions actioned. Additionally, and more recently, CIB communicated to the chairperson of the Steering Group in April 2022 that it was no longer appropriate for it to participate in the Group. Several Steering Group members expressed disappointment with CIB's decision believing it undermined the value of the Group's work.

UNCRPD Report

In 2021, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth published Ireland's first report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁹.

The report sets out what Ireland is doing to protect and enhance the rights of people with disabilities. The report identifies SLIS as the national Sign Language Interpreting Service. Additionally, it highlights that the NDIS commits to resourcing the provision of a quality assurance and registration scheme for sign language interpreters and ongoing professional training and development. The report notes that SLIS is on track to deliver these commitments within the Strategy timeframe.

The report also highlighted the following key SLIS achievements to date in relation to the NDIS:

- a) Increased numbers of interpreters to deliver Irish Remote Interpreting Services (IRIS);
- b) Publishing a strategic framework report to investigate ways to increase the number of interpreters practising in Ireland;
- c) Running pilot programmes with Revenue and An Garda Síochána in line with requirements to deliver on commitments under the ISL Act Sec 6(1);
- d) Increased staffing to develop and promote the use of IRIS for the deaf community and public bodies;
- e) Development of a schedule of accredited Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for interpreters.

Training for Sign Language and Deaf Interpreters in Ireland

The Centre for Deaf Studies in TCD is the only degree course available to people interested in becoming Irish sign language interpreters. Around twenty students commence the degree programme each year, which has three streams: interpreting, deaf studies and teaching ISL. Of those that achieve the minimum proficiency for the interpreting stream, an average of four students graduate as sign language interpreters, with the balance opting for the two other streams. SLIS estimate that at least 10 students need to complete the course each year to alleviate the national skills shortage and to meet increased demand as a result of the commencement of the Irish Sign Language Act¹⁰.

⁷ "We will resource the Sign Language Interpretation Service to increase the number of trained sign language and deaf interpreters, to put a quality assurance and registration scheme for interpreters in place and to provide on-going professional training and development". (Page 17 NDIS, Department of Justice and Equality, 2017).

⁸ Officially known as The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022 (NDIS) Projects Steering Group for actions relating to the Sign Language interpreting Service.

⁹ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021, Ireland's first report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/75e45-irelands-first-report-to-the-united-nations-committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/>

¹⁰ SLIS, 2019, SLIS Position paper on increasing the availability and quality of Sign Language Interpreting in Ireland.

Extending the hours of Irish Sign Language remote interpretation service to evenings and weekends and expanded capacity for remote service through the recruitment of Irish Sign Language interpreters

SLIS Actions

- ▶ SLIS extended the hours for IRIS availability as follows:

	January 2017	January 2019	June 2022
Weekdays	10.00-16.00	08.00-20.00	09.00-20.00
Saturday	-	10.00-16.00	10.00-16.00
Sunday	-	12.00-14.00	12.00-14.00

- ▶ The requests for IRIS bookings for the 8 am to 9 pm and 7 pm to 8 pm time slots were extremely small so these time slots were discontinued. The service now operates from 9 am to 8 pm weekdays, 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday and 12 noon to 2 pm on Sunday.

Cover was provided for bank holidays during Covid-19 restrictions (for example, for GP appointments) and this has continued into 2022. The service continues to close from December 24th to January 2nd.

In 2021, IRIS changed from Skype to Zoom as the standard software platform.

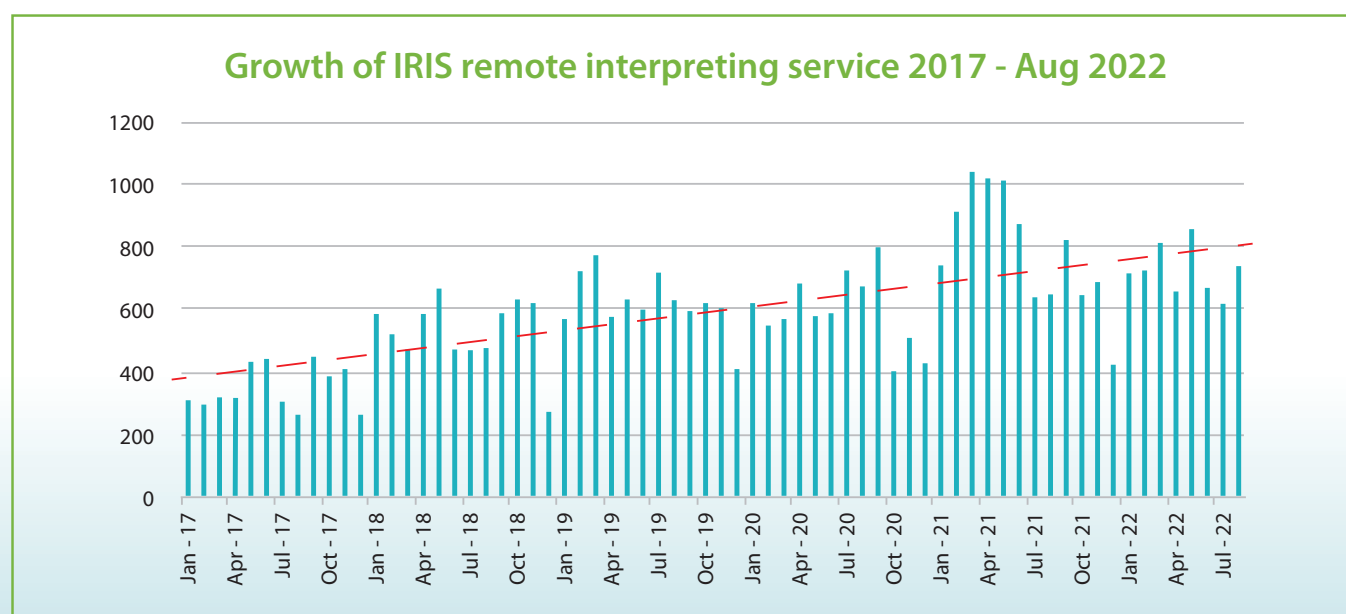
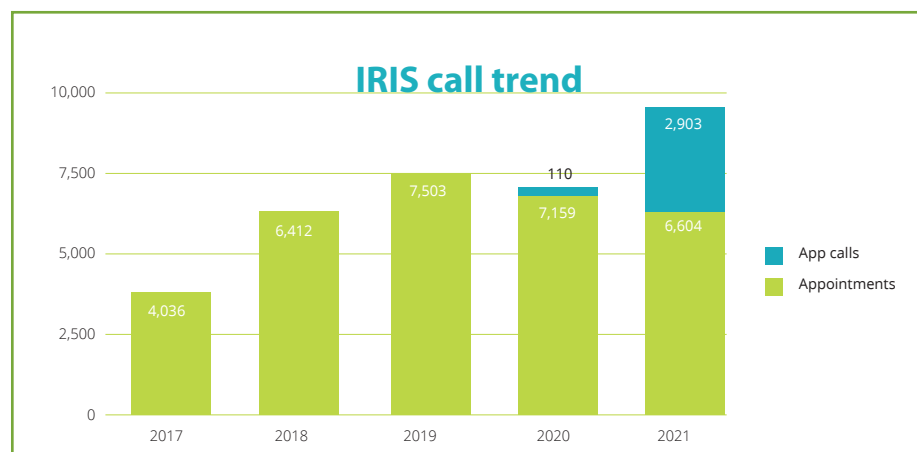
- ▶ In 2020, IRIS set up an office in the Deaf Village Ireland to cater for physical accessibility and for people with digital literacy, digital access and literacy issues. The office was not long open when the Covid-19 pandemic started, and it had to close due to health restrictions. It was opened again in November 2021 on a trial basis operating on

Tuesday and Thursday mornings, mainly using telephone relay (TRS) with some video relay (VRS).

- ▶ CIB funded the development of an App, the Djannah App, to meet on demand requirements such as booking a restaurant. The App was piloted from 16th November 2020 to 30th June 2021. The aim was to pilot the technology to deliver on-demand and appointment-based remote interpreting using an App on a single user-friendly platform.
- ▶ Prior to the NDIS, SLIS had 1.5 whole-time equivalent interpreters. The CIB provided additional funding to employ interpreters. Since 2017, SLIS has recruited additional interpreters and now has 4.5 whole-time equivalents comprised of 8 interpreters on 17½ hour contracts (newer appointments), 1 person on a 6-hour contract (pre-2017 recruitment) and one person on a 12-hour contract (pre-2017 recruitment). These interpreters work from a number of locations around Ireland.

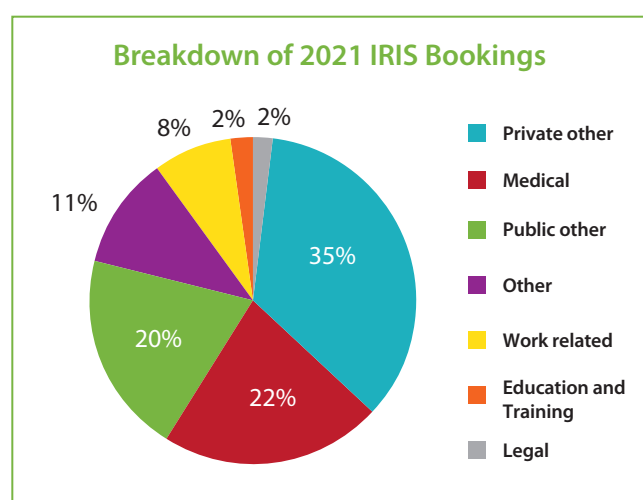
What worked

The number of IRIS appointments has trended upwards¹¹. The App proved popular as IRIS operates on a booking system and is not well suited to on-demand requests, although there were issues around the timing of the App's introduction and awareness-raising. Combined, the App and IRIS appointments grew from 4,046 in 2017 to 9,507 in 2021.



Around 20% of unique service users were new to IRIS¹². In 2021, when hours were extended, 12% of unique IRIS service users were new service users.

Over one-third of 2021 IRIS bookings (excluding cancellations) were for private purposes, 1 in 5 were for medical reasons, and another 1 in 5 were for public services. From 2017 to 2020, private purpose bookings grew from 40% to 48% of all bookings but fell back to 35% in 2021. Medical bookings grew from 12% in 2017 to 22% in 2021. Public sector bookings declined from 25% in 2017 to 20% in 2021. All other areas remained relatively stable in proportionate terms.

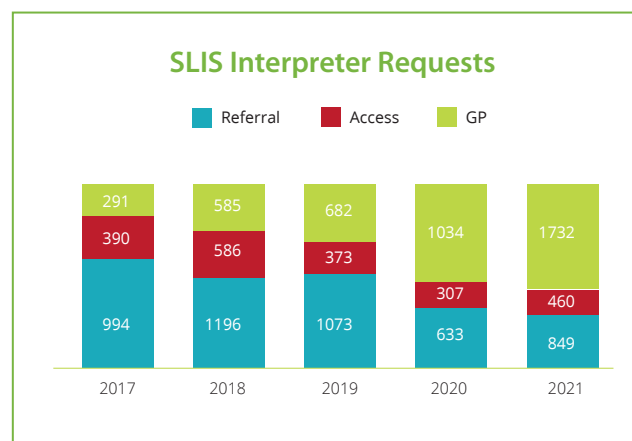


Feedback from the Deaf community about the physically accessible IRIS office in Deaf Village Ireland was very positive, and there was a wish for it to continue.

Remote working introduced as a result of the pandemic has meant that SLIS has been able to recruit interpreters who live outside Dublin. SLIS currently employs four interpreters from Munster and Connacht, three in Leinster and three in Dublin.

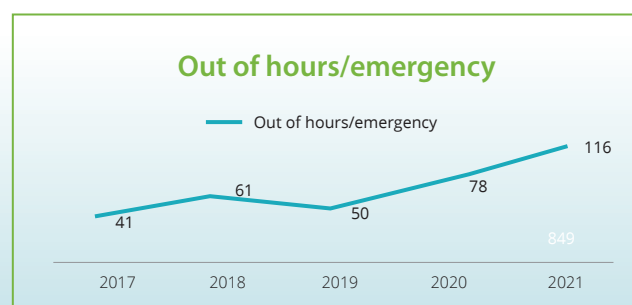
The Djanah App pilot was evaluated by Cruinn Advisory in July 2021. Over the pilot period, 238 Deaf users registered for the App. There were 3,929 registered calls, of which 2,981 (76%) were answered. Twelve interpreters worked through the App part-time (5 WTE) and provided a total of 1,251 interpreting hours. Seventy-six per cent of people using the App did so at home, and 12% used it at work. Eighty-seven per cent of users indicated that their expectations had been met. The App eliminated the need to book an interpreter and to specify the reasons for interpreting known, thus increasing privacy.

Requests for interpreters through SLIS, including emergency and out of hours calls, grew significantly from 1,675 in 2017 to 3,041 in 2021. The GP access scheme has proven very popular and now accounts for 57% of requests (17% in 2017). In 2021, 1,732 GP/primary care appointments were arranged compared to 291 in 2017. Requests for referral have declined and represented 28% of 2021 requests (59% in 2017).



The number of requests successfully filled has improved. For example, in 2017, 56% of referral requests were filled. In 2021 this rose to 74%. In 2017, 38% of access requests were filled. This rose to 42% in 2021. Finally, GP access requests filled rose from 88% in 2017 to 94% in 2021.

Out of hours and emergency calls rose from 41 in 2017 to 116 in 2021.



¹¹ Appointments includes cancellations. For example in 2021 there were 548 cancellations, 559 in 2020, 560 in 2019, 453 in 2018 and 208 in 2017.

¹² Based on data from 2021, 2019 and 2018.

Challenges

There is a shortage of Irish Sign Language interpreters, which limits further expansion of IRIS hours beyond what is already provided. In addition, interpreters may be reluctant to work certain time slots, e.g. Bank Holidays and over the Christmas period resulting in gaps in provision. SLIS also does not have a budget to cover interpreting for these holiday periods. Feedback from the Deaf community and interpreters interviewed for this review indicated a desire for weekend hours similar to weekdays and for the availability of time slots to be improved. The 22-minute limit on individual time slots can also be a barrier.

The NDIS budget for the IRIS office in Deaf Village Ireland covers office cost (including rent), with cost of employing interpreters funded under salaries in the main NDIS funding stream. The lease on the Deaf Village Ireland office ended in March 2022, and is extended to the end of 2022.


SLIS's experience has been that each time it increases interpreting capacity; demand quickly fills this capacity. Currently, no interpreters living overseas are employed and it is hoped that the introduction of the Register will improve availability. The COVID-19 lockdown has necessitated the use by SLIS of interpreters working

remotely. In the future, there may be increased opportunities for SLIS to employ interpreters working remotely and on shorter, more flexible contracts to cover evening and weekend slots.

The App was operated as a pilot and this was completed in 2021. While it was positively evaluated, no provision was made for continuation or reintroduction of the App into 2022. There were challenges for interpreters in meeting demand, and some members of the Deaf community may have had unrealistic expectations of what a new on-demand service could achieve. The CIB has made a case to the Department of Social Protection for funding for the App, but a commencement date is not yet known. The Deaf community want to be included in any consultation about the App to ensure it is user friendly and integrated with other remote interpreting options.

The App was not integrated into IRIS technology, so there is, therefore, no single platform for back office management and administration for remote interpreting services. Rostering interpreters for different systems that use different processes proved very challenging, and SLIS did not have access to data on usage and new registrations for the App.

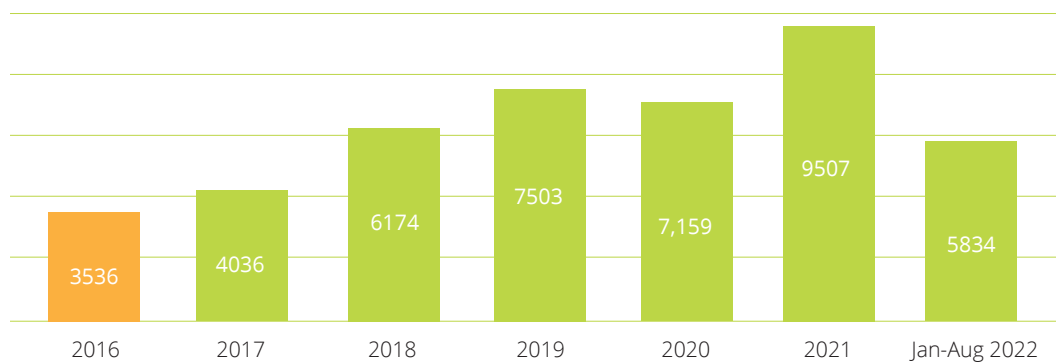
Overall traffic light score

NDIS Action	Number of Responses					Overall
	Green	Green/ Orange	Orange	Orange/ Red	Red	
Extend ISL remote interpreting service to the evenings and weekends and expanded capacity for remote service through the recruitment of Irish Sign Language Interpreters	4	5	3	0	0	

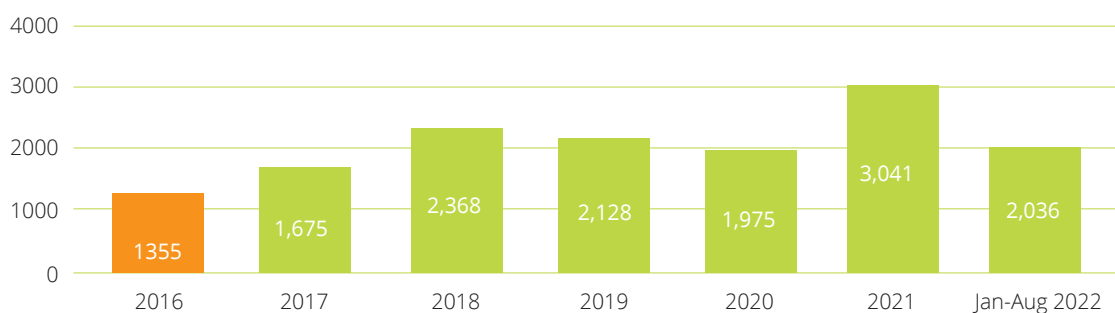
The following weighting system (Green = 5; Green/Orange = 4; Orange = 3; Orange/Red = 2; Red = 1) was used to calculate stakeholders' mean score for this action.

Stakeholder mean score: 4.08 (out of 5)

IRIS Assignments 2016 & NDIS 2017 -2022



Requests for referral supports 2016 & NDIS 2017-2022





Social Inclusion/ 'Voucher' Scheme

SLIS Actions

While the idea of a social inclusion voucher is not contained in the NDIS, it is funded under the CIB SLIS NDIS grant stream to respond to section 9 of the Irish Sign Language Act:

Support for access to events, services and activities for users of Irish Sign Language

9. (1) *The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection may, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas, provide funds to facilitate users of Irish Sign Language with regard to support in relation to access to social, educational and cultural events and services (including medical) and other activities by such users as specified in guidelines made by that Minister of the Government.*

9. (2) *Guidelines under this section shall specify the events, services and activities to which the guidelines apply and shall make provision regarding the management and delivery of the support in relation to access to those events, services or activities by users of Irish Sign Language.*

Funding of €131,259 was provided by the Department of Social Protection through the CIB for the provision of a voucher/social inclusion scheme. The aim of the Voucher Scheme Pilot Project was to enable users of Irish Sign Language to avail of free interpreting hours to access social, educational, cultural events, services

(including medical) and other activities. The pilot also allowed for the recruitment of a dedicated Social Inclusion and Communications Officer to promote and administer the scheme according to the procedures outlined under the management and governance processes of SLIS.

- ▶ SLIS developed guidelines on the operation of the Voucher scheme.
- ▶ The scheme was piloted between July and September 2021 and then extended to October 2021 (interpreting events could happen up to November 12). The pilot was evaluated and deemed a success. However, the evaluation report is still being finalised and has not been published by the CIB.

The CIB plans to apply to the Department of Social Protection for further funding to roll-out the scheme, but a commencement date is not yet known.

What Worked

The Deaf community used and liked the Voucher and were disappointed when the pilot ended and the lack of a plan for its continuity.

Examples of positive feedback provided during this evaluation's consultation process included one respondent stating that the Voucher Scheme was "fantastic, brilliant, amazing". They said that they were able to use it as a private person to have private group meetings, to book the theatre and to book a dentist appointment. Another respondent echoed these sentiments; they said the Deaf community loved it because it did not depend on hearing people. They said that the Deaf community were initially unclear about the Scheme but then fully embraced it.

The Voucher scheme enabled access to a range of activities for the Deaf community and provided more freedom to participate in various aspects of their lives and community.


Some stakeholders considered the booking system for the Voucher to be cumbersome, and interpreters were not always available. In addition, there were some views that the Deaf community availed of the Voucher for activities covered by legislation (education, legal, medical) rather than its intended purpose for cultural, social and community inclusion activities. Some Deaf people applied for a Voucher but were turned down; they did not know why their application was not successful.

The Deaf community was not involved in the review of the pilot or discussions about its continuation. There were strong views that the scheme needs to be mainstreamed quickly to comply with the Irish Sign Language Act. There were concerns that the Deaf community were not consulted during the Voucher's planning or development phases.

Challenges

The timing of the scheme's introduction was not ideal. For example, June is a quiet time of the year for Sign Language interpreting service, because people are on holidays. There was also lower demand because of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, there were only 60 assignments between July and August. The number picked up in September, and between September and October, there were 212 assignments.

Overall traffic light score

NDIS Action	Number of Responses					Overall
	Green	Green/ Orange	Orange	Orange/ Red	Red	
Social Inclusion/'Voucher' Scheme	2	1	3	4	2	

Stakeholder Mean Score: 2.75 (out of 5)



Increasing the number of trained Sign Language Interpreters and Deaf Interpreters

SLIS Actions

- ▶ From 2017 to 2021, SLIS used NDIS funding to increase the number of sign language interpreters it employed from 1.5 WTE to 4.5 WTE.
- ▶ In 2018, SLIS commissioned Cruinn Associates to develop a strategic framework to increase the availability and quality of sign language interpreting¹³. The main recommendations were:
 - educational investment and supports to increase the pool of students graduating as interpreters
 - development of blended learning options to attract students outside Dublin and increase the regional pool of interpreters
 - creation of new pathway options for existing Irish Sign Language interpreters and new entrants, including conversion courses and CPD
 - provision of training options in fields of expertise such as legal, medical, media and employment
 - sustainable development of regionally-based Irish Sign Language interpreters by enhancing Video Relay Service (i.e. IRIS)
 - enhancing employment opportunities with service providers such as banks, hospitals, courts
 - development of future pathways/routes back to the Irish Sign Language profession
 - establishing a registration process for all Irish Sign Language interpreters.
- ▶ Implementation of some of these recommendations is not within the capacity of SLIS on its own.
- ▶ In 2019, SLIS developed a position paper¹⁴ which outlined that between 80 and 90 Irish Sign Language interpreters are working part-time, equivalent to 60 WTE (12,000 interpreting hours) and only around four enter the profession each year. SLIS estimate that between 8 and 10 entrants to the profession are necessary to meet demand. It also believes that short-term action is necessary in terms of supports to enable existing part-time interpreters to expand their availability and areas of expertise. SLIS recommended the development of a strategy with key stakeholders to progress the above recommendations set out in the framework, especially in respect of the throughput of students and new entrants.
- ▶ The NDIS provided funding to SLIS to provide a Deaf interpreting course. The tender was awarded to CDS in TCD. The first intake in 2021 was intended for 12 people, but the CDS opened it up to 24.

¹³ Cruinn Associates, 2019, *Strategic Framework to Increase the Availability and Quality of Sign Language Interpreting in Ireland*, SLIS.

¹⁴ SLIS 2019, *Position Paper on Increasing the Availability and Quality of Sign Language Interpreting in Ireland*.

What Worked

Twenty-four students commenced and 23 completed the Deaf interpreting course, which was delivered by CDS. It took place over nine months via remote delivery, and feedback indicates that the training staff were very supportive of the participants. The training provides an opportunity for Deaf interpreters to work on their own or in association with a hearing interpreter. Deaf interpreters can provide supports that bridge a cultural or linguistic barrier that has been recognised within the community. Representatives of the Deaf community praised CIB and SLIS's funding of the deaf interpreting course, and they also commended CDS for the supports it provided to the participants.

Challenges

SLIS is not an awarding or accrediting body and, therefore, can only act as an influencer in respect of increasing the number of trained Irish Sign Language interpreters. It has carried out research and developed a position paper on strategies to increase the number of trained interpreters, but the implementation requires the commitment of the Higher Education Authority and education providers.


TCD has plans to introduce a postgraduate diploma, but funding has not been secured to progress this. In general, CDS staffing is stretched and has limited capacity to add training provision¹⁵.

SLIS estimates that between 8 and 10 people qualifying as interpreters annually is necessary to meet demand. In addition to attracting more people to train as interpreters, SLIS believes that over the next five to ten years, additional educational supports need to be put in place to ensure more students who commence interpreting courses to meet the minimum standards to graduate. On average, only 3-4 of an annual intake to the CDS degree course who obtain the necessary 60% standard graduate as an interpreter¹⁶. Applications for the course now come through the CAO system. In the past, the CDS interviewed applicants, and this enabled an assessment of their suitability, commitment and likelihood of completing the course. Moving to CAO applications has not enhanced the number of students applying for the degree course in interpreting.

Career guidance counsellors may be unaware of interpreting as a career option and therefore do not advocate it to their students. In addition, many interpreters are self-employed, and this may be an unattractive option for new graduates who might prefer to be employees, particularly during the early stages of their careers.

While an increase in Deaf interpreters is a welcome development, there is currently insufficient work for Deaf interpreters. Implementation of the Irish Sign Language Act will improve demand for these services, but it will take time.

Overall traffic light score

NDIS Action	Number of Responses					Overall
	Green	Green/ Orange	Orange	Orange/ Red	Red	
Increasing the number of trained Sign Language Interpreters and Deaf Interpreters	0	5	1	1	3	

Stakeholder Mean Score: 2.80 (out of 5)

¹⁵ 4 full time and 2-part time staff (5 WTE) look after on average 60-80 students each year.

¹⁶ There are three streams to the degree course: deaf studies, teaching Irish Sign Language and interpreting and many students opt for the first two streams.



Putting in place a registration and quality assurance scheme for interpreters

SLIS Actions

- ▶ SLIS's Quality Development Officer was assigned full-time for two years to develop the register, the Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI), and associated policies and procedures.
- ▶ A consultation process about the register took place in 2018 and 2019. A working group on Registration and Quality Assurance Scheme and another on Deaf Interpreting were established. A National Forum was held on 8th June 2019.
- ▶ SLIS and CIB agreed that for potential conflict of interest reasons, SLIS could not 'hold' the register. While SLIS can continue to provide secretariat services to the Panel, it is not a sitting member, and the RISLI panel is independent of SLIS. In February 2021, a separate Company Limited by Guarantee, RISLI CLG, was formed.
- ▶ An expert group, the RISLI Panel, was appointed by the Department of Social Protection to develop and maintain a quality assurance scheme and standards for entry and maintenance of a register. The Panel is also responsible for setting qualifications and renewal requirements.
- ▶ representative/nominee of the Department of Social Protection and the chairperson (appointed by the Department of Social Protection).
- ▶ The SLIS Quality Development Officers, the SLIS Manager and a Board member developed 16 policy papers to guide the work of the panel. The papers were reviewed with CIB. At RISLI's first meeting on 22nd December 2020, 11¹⁷ policies were presented and adopted in principle but have not yet been fully ratified, and 5 papers required further review, including Garda Vetting policy and specialisations. Adoption of the policy papers is necessary to contribute to the bye-laws of RISLI and its Constitution and Articles of Association.
- ▶ A website was set up, www.risli.ie. The development of the website was led by CIB; its management is now being handed over to RISLI.
- ▶ The register was published on 22nd December 2020, and interpreters began to register. The Register is a voluntary register referenced in law and policy and does not have any statutory basis. However, under section 6 of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017, interpreters used by public bodies must be on the Register.

The Panel comprises three deaf experts in interpreting and the Deaf community, one registered Irish Sign Language interpreter, one academic expert in interpreting or Deaf studies, one member with international experience, one professional interpreting representative, one public body representative, one member experienced in establishing professional regulatory body, one

¹⁷ Register Structure and Governance, Registration Panel – Membership and Operation, Registration Panel – Code of Conduct, Registration Process, Code of Conduct, GDPR, and Privacy Policy, Complaints Committee – Membership and Operations, Appeals Committee – Membership and Operation, Complaints and Mediation Process, Appeals Process

What Worked

The Register is operational, and interpreters are registering with it. The initial requirements for registration were not overly onerous so that interpreters would be attracted to register. As of June 2022, there were over 110 hearing and Deaf interpreters on the Register. This number will grow as interpreters complete the CDS courses.

The Register enables the Deaf community to source interpreters on their own.

The complaints procedure has been put in place, and complaints are being received.

Challenges

Changes in CIB personnel have resulted in a loss of continuity and a number of changes in the RISLI Panel chairperson.

RISLI is at an early stage of development, and although a full-time manager will be appointed soon, it will require administration support (e.g. in the interim from SLIS) to further its aims in the short term. However, resourcing the RISLI secretariat is an ongoing challenge for 2022. A Quality Assurance (QA) system has yet to become fully operational. The proposed model comprises the establishment of a Panel sub-committee to award points to CPD courses. Additionally, the sub-committee will conduct post-learning assessments for courses with a certain points threshold.

It will also provide peer support and, in certain circumstances, assess interpreters.


Some stakeholders indicated that the complaints process is not working well due to long delays in resolving complaints, parties to complaints not being kept adequately informed and procedures not being adhered to.

The transition to the new corporate structure for RISLI happened quite quickly and was not seen as transparent by many of those interviewed. Stakeholders expressed concerns about RISLI CLG's corporate governance, including the process of decision-making. Stakeholders are concerned that these issues undermine RISLI's integrity as an independent body.

The Register currently does not identify if interpreters are Deaf or hearing or if they have a specialism for interpreting in particular settings, e.g. medical.

In April 2022, the CIB, on behalf of RISLI, advertised for the recruitment of a manager for RISLI who will hold a full-time, permanent post. The manager will be based in Deaf Village Ireland in Cabra. The appointed person will report to the Chair of the RISLI Board of Directors in relation to employment and corporate governance matters and to the Chair of the RISLI Panel in respect of accreditation, registration and associated matters. He or she will be responsible for the management and development of the national accreditation and registration scheme for Irish Sign Language interpreters in Ireland.

Overall traffic light score

NDIS Action	Number of Responses					Overall
	Green	Green/ Orange	Orange	Orange/ Red	Red	
Putting in place a registration and quality assurance scheme for interpreters	5	3	1	1	0	

Stakeholder Mean Score: 4.20 (out of 5)



Providing ongoing professional training and development

SLIS Actions

SLIS has always provided periodic CPD for sign language interpreters, for example, on topics such as GDPR. It has also provided training for deaf interpreters working in legal settings.

- ▶ SLIS provides CPD for free in order to ensure access for interpreters and to address financial barriers. A monthly newsletter outlining upcoming CPD events was circulated by SLIS on behalf of RISLI in 2021 and 2022.
- ▶ In 2019, SLIS commissioned Dr. Elizabeth McSkeane to develop a framework for CPD for sign language interpreters¹⁸. The framework proposed content grouped into four themes: maintenance and improvement of language skills, maintenance and improvement of interpreting skills, specialisations (such as health, education, legal, employment, children, etc.) and wider topics (such as those that meet a particular need like ethical considerations).
- ▶ In 2021, SLIS provided a calendar of short CPD courses to support the quality of interpreters and help them meet RISLI's annual CPD requirements. The 2021 outcomes included 8 short courses, with

13 course sessions totalling 43.5 hours provision, for 173 participants, enabling 769 learning hours, at a cost of €10,232.

- ▶ In 2022, SLIS engaged in a tendering process for the provision of medical interpreting. The contract was awarded to the CDS.
- ▶ CIB was responsible for organising a six-month mentor training programme for Irish Sign Language interpreters. Nine registered Irish Sign Language interpreters participated on the programme, which was delivered by the TIEM Center. The mentors will provide developmental guidance to Deaf and hearing interpreters at any stage of their professional career. In addition, RISLI will promote and support the mentors to establish their own practice within the professional field. However, the feedback from the mentors is that they lack clarity on how the mentoring process will work and how they will be paid and none have practiced as mentors to date.

¹⁸ Skeane, E., 2019, *A Framework for Continuing Professional Development for Sign Language Interpreters in Ireland: Final Report*, SLIS.

What Worked

Training provided by SLIS was valued by participants.

Challenges

No one body is responsible for identifying CPD needs.


Until 2022, SLIS had an annual training budget that it used to provide CPD. SLIS applied to CIB for a training budget of €78,000 in 2022 for interpreting in medical and legal contexts and 18 short courses. However, approval was given for €23,000, all of which will go to the CDS in TCD to provide medical interpreting training. The budget must be spent in 2022, and a course has not yet commenced.

The CDS itself also has budgetary issues. For example, it plans to put a Masters course for interpreters in place but currently has no budget to progress it.

Training of professionals by professional's costs money, and recent training budgets have been inadequate and too small to be effective (either in terms of cost or meeting needs). Focussing on the provision of unstructured CPD through webinars, case studies and peer groups might be a useful stop-gap measure.

Stakeholders indicated that mentoring programme feedback has been poor, including fees that mentees had to pay; too much focus on written requirements; mentees only got a certificate of completion, and there was no follow-up.

Overall traffic light score

NDIS Action	Number of Responses					Overall
	Green	Green/ Orange	Orange	Orange/ Red	Red	
Providing ongoing professional training and development	5	2	5	0	0	

Stakeholder Mean Score: 4.00 (out of 5)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation held different perspectives on the success or otherwise of actions assigned to SLIS under the NDIS. Overall, the most successful actions were in respect of:

- ▶ Putting in place a register for interpreters (overall score of 4.20 out of a possible 5). The register is in place, interpreters are registering with it, and a governance structure has been developed to oversee the operation of the register, with RISLI employing its own staff from July 1, 2022. It will take time for all aspects to become operational and bedded down.
- ▶ Extending remote interpreting hours (overall score of 4.08 out of a possible 5). IRIS hours were extended to evenings and weekends, but gaps remain at certain times of the year (e.g. the Christmas period). The App pilot added an on-demand dimension that the Deaf community appreciated, and there are opportunities to integrate the App, IRIS and the SLIS booking system onto a single platform that would provide a single

source of multiple delivery options to the Deaf community and widen choice.

- ▶ Providing on-going professional training and development to interpreters (overall score of 4.00 out of a possible 5). Over the course of the NDIS, SLIS continued to provide CPD opportunities for interpreters but going forward, funding for CPD and a process for identifying the CPD needs of interpreters should be addressed.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's first report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021) also highlighted achievements by SLIS in respect of sourcing increased numbers of IRIS interpreters; publishing a strategic framework on ways to increase the number of interpreters; running pilot programmes with public bodies in respect of public sector duty to provide access to interpretation; increased IRIS staffing, and development of a schedule of accredited CPD for interpreters.



Actions that proved to be more challenging were:

- ▶ Increasing the number of sign language interpreters (overall score of 2.75 out of a possible 5). While the number of practising interpreters registered with RISLI has increased to just over 110 (from 80-90), and a number of Deaf interpreters were trained, the number of students successfully completing the sign language interpreting course run by the CDS remains small. The number of sign language interpreters in Ireland is a major blockage to full implementation of the Irish Sign Language Act and the development of new and existing services for the Deaf community and is outside SLIS's sole remit to address. A cross-stakeholder initiative with the education sector is necessary to progress this action.
- ▶ Provision of a voucher/social inclusion scheme (overall score of 2.75 out of a possible 5). A voucher scheme that enabled the Deaf community to access interpreting services was successfully piloted but has not yet been mainstreamed
- ▶ Increase IRIS interpreter capacity to facilitate the extension of IRIS operating hours, especially at weekends, and maintain the walk-in IRIS station in Deaf Village Ireland to accommodate those with digital, literacy or other needs.
- ▶ Urgently mainstream the Voucher scheme and reintroduce the App to meet on-demand needs.
- ▶ Develop an integrated remote interpreting platform for IRIS that includes different options to meet the full suite of needs of the Deaf community, i.e. through an App, remote interpreting and telephone relay interpreting. Over the longer term and to address the equality and social inclusion needs of the Deaf community, the objective should be to build towards a seamless and user-friendly 24/7 remote interpreting service.
- ▶ Promote awareness and uptake of the services provided by Deaf interpreters.
- ▶ Introduce and resource SLIS to provide an annual programme of CPD based on what stakeholders (RISLI, training providers, interpreters and Deaf community) say is needed, and support this with an online platform as part of the Register to facilitate interpreters to upload their CPD evidence. The RISLI Panel decided in February 2022 that the role of RISLI Panel is to monitor and guide the CPD — not to provide it (SLIS was identified as a provider). RISLI is not a provider of training for registrants; SLIS, along with other education and training organisations, should and must continue to provide training for registrants.
- ▶ Ensure that RISLI is adequately funded to carry out its functions and that its governance structure is transparent and accountable.
- ▶ RISLI should develop and implement a QA system for interpreting to ensure that interpreters provide an evidence-based and continuously improving quality service to the Deaf community and hearing community.

Priorities for the next NDIS

Stakeholders consulted for this review were asked to identify what they believe are key priorities for the next NDIS. All agreed that the named NDIS priorities remain current and require further progression. Specifically, the following were named:

- ▶ Consult with the Deaf community to ensure that actions are Deaf community-informed and enhance collaboration between and with the Deaf community. SLIS is well placed to lead out on consultation exercises with the Deaf community.
- ▶ Develop a long term strategy resourced by multi-annual funding over three to five years to provide for planning, continuity and certainty in respect of initiatives for the Deaf community. The funding model should be equality-based.
- ▶ Continue efforts to increase the number of trained Deaf and hearing interpreters. To achieve this capacity, resourcing issues within the CDS need to be addressed. The availability of interpreters is essential to ongoing functioning of SLIS and plans for extending availability of its services to meet the social inclusion needs of the Deaf community.
- ▶ Develop career pathways for Irish Sign Language interpreters, including the provision of salaried positions.

Recommendations

Provision of social inclusion and equality-based Irish Sign Language interpreting services to the Deaf community:

The provision of interpreting services (including remote interpreting), a vital communication channel for the Deaf community, should be on a social inclusion equality basis. SLIS should work in partnership with relevant Government agencies and Departments to achieve this. Key aspects of the provision of interpreting services are underpinned by legislation. Initiatives to tackle the social isolation and discrimination experienced by the Deaf community should not be predominantly project-based or short-term, as has been the case with the NDIS.

Successor initiatives to the NDIS should aim to remove the social isolation and discrimination barriers faced by the Deaf community and should be predicated on mainstreaming necessary remote interpreting services. Future initiatives to address the remote interpreting needs of the Deaf community should be set within a long-term strategy of addressing the social exclusion and discrimination they experience.

Any provision should adhere to the principle set out in SLIS's strategy of 'Nothing about us without us' whereby consultation and, where appropriate, co-design/production with the Deaf community should be the norm.

Governance:

SLIS should, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, ensure in any successor programme to the NDIS that it has the capacity/capability to undertake the actions for which it will be responsible.

A review by SLIS of the operation of the oversight group, the NDIS Projects Steering Group, should take place to assess its operations and composition and to identify how such structures might be strengthened. Any future implementation oversight committee of which SLIS is a member should continue to be underpinned by a comprehensive and agreed Terms of Reference that sets out the committee's function, scope, membership, attendance requirements, decision-making, reporting structure and reporting mechanisms.

RISLI should ratify its policies and procedures as a matter of urgency. These are an essential component of registration as interpreters on the Register effectively sign up to RISLI policies and procedures. Policies and procedures also need to be translated into Irish Sign Language. RISLI's corporate governance should be clear and transparent.

Funding:

Provision of an integrated Irish Sign Language interpreting platform within IRIS should be funded. The aim should be to build towards the provision of remote interpreting for emergency situations and on a 24/7 basis. Multiple service delivery options should be incorporated into the platform in order to address the equality and social inclusion requirements of the Deaf community.

Given that remote interpreting addresses the social inclusion of the Deaf community, which is an on-going issue not a once-off project, funding should be predicated on a multi-annual basis to ensure the mainstream provision of a continuous and high-quality remote interpreting service.

Capacity:

SLIS should be supported to attract and retain a comprehensive team of Irish Sign Language interpreters to deliver IRIS, the national remote interpreting service. This should include hiring interpreters to work remotely outside Dublin.

Collaboration:

The experience of the NDIS has demonstrated that SLIS on its own cannot address several key challenges, such as increasing the number of sign language interpreters. It needs to work in cooperation with other important stakeholders within the Deaf community and externally. SLIS, by virtue of its unique bridging position in which it interacts on a continuous basis with Deaf people, interpreters and service providers, should take a lead role in forming multi-partner networks and alliances to tackle the social exclusion/discrimination barriers experienced by the Deaf community.

To facilitate the development of effective Deaf-led consortiums, SLIS should work with network members to develop their organisational capacity to interact and engage with policy-making and funding bodies.

Communication:

SLIS and RISLI should ensure information and resource material is available in Irish Sign Language.

The RISLI website should be reviewed to ensure it is user-friendly, Deaf-friendly, easy to maintain and adequately resourced. Additionally, there should be regular communications between RISLI and registered interpreters.

SLIS and RISLI should play a role in further efforts to promote the Irish Sign Language Act and the Register with the Deaf community, public bodies and the private sector. A specific targeted campaign to inform the public sector about their obligations under the Irish Sign Language Act and the Register is essential. The services of Deaf interpreters should also be promoted.

SLIS should take a key role along with Deaf community representative bodies in ensuring that policy-makers and funding organisations are fully-briefed on the needs of Deaf people so that successor programmes to the NDIS fully and comprehensively address the barriers to social inclusion/equality that they face.

Piloting:

While in an ideal scenario social inclusion measures, especially those named in legislation, should be introduced in full, often a period of piloting is necessary to work out operational matters. Any necessary piloting should ensure that they are informed by the Deaf community in terms of design, implementation, evaluation and any subsequent mainstreaming.

The design and planning of pilots should be on a co-production basis with the Deaf community and conform to their philosophy of "*Nothing for us without us*".

Additionally, pilots should be adequately funded for sufficient periods of time to facilitate awareness about them filtering out to the Deaf community and thus having as many people as possible engage with the pilot.

A clear timetable for mainstreaming should be communicated to the Deaf community when a pilot is successful.

SLIS should be included in any consultation process concerning the provision of Irish Sign Language interpreting services.

Increasing the number of interpreters:

RISLI should progress the development of a career pathway for Irish Sign Language interpreters, including the development of a pay structure, promotion of salaried interpreting posts and promotion of interpreting as a career option. In addition, public services need to be made aware of interpreting services and their public sector duty under the Irish Sign Language Act.

SLIS should play a key role in planning and guiding the development of accredited training. SLIS should form an alliance with Deaf community representative organisations, CISLI, RISLI and other stakeholders, to advocate with/encourage the HEA and other decision makers to develop and implement policies to increase the number of trained Irish Sign Language interpreters.

CPD:

Resource provision of a structured programme of CPD delivered by SLIS and a range of providers, such as CDS. Content should be informed by the Deaf community, interpreters, SLIS and RISLI. Unstructured CPD programmes should also be developed to support interpreters.

A multi-annual budget should be put in place to allow for the development of CPD programmes.

Stakeholders (CISLI, RISLI, SLIS, and representatives of the Deaf community) should come together to agree a process for the identification of CPD needs. RISLI is not a provider of training for registrants; SLIS, along with other education and training organisations, should continue to provide training for registrants (and be adequately resourced to do so), with the role of the RISLI Panel being to monitor and guide the CPD.

Quality assurance:

RISLI should advance a Quality Assurance system and develop an assessment process for training and CPD, including in respect of specialisms such as working in legal, medical or education settings.

RISLI should be resourced to implement any proposed model for a Quality Assurance system.



SLIS services – what we do

A Referral Service ▶ to identify ISL interpreters and link to your communication needs.

Text: 087 980 6996 Email: bookings@slis.ie

Access service ▶ to support the Deaf community overcome access barriers to interpreting

Text: 087 980 6996 Email: bookings@slis.ie

GP access ▶ to arrange interpreting for GP / primary care appointments, with the HSE

Text: 087 980 6996 Email: bookings@slis.ie

Social fund ▶ to arrange and pay for interpreters for funerals and hardship cases

Text: 087 980 6996 Email: bookings@slis.ie

24/7 emergency service for interpreters - legal or medical emergencies only

Text: 087 672 5179

IRIS Irish Remote Interpreting Service

- ▶ to book an appointment online, go to www.slis.ie/iris or <https://iris2.gettimely.com/>

Text: 086 012 5900



Sign Language Interpreting Service
Deaf Village Ireland
Ratoath Road
Cabra, Dublin 7

Tel: +353 (0)818 078 440

Mobile: 087 980 6996

Email: reception@slis.ie

Web: www.slis.ie

