

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

VOUCHER SCHEME

UNDER SECTION 9 OF THE IRISH
SIGN LANGUAGE ACT 2017

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Background

These Operational Guidelines for the 2023 ‘Voucher Scheme’ set out how Irish Sign Language Users (‘ISL Users’) can get ISL-English interpreting so they can access social, educational and cultural events and services. These include medical and other activities, as detailed in this document.

These guidelines respond to Irish Sign Language (ISL) Act 2017 Section 9

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

Funding

The Department for Social Protection will pay for this scheme through the Citizens Information Board (CIB). The scheme is approved by the CIB.

Voucher Scheme 2023

These guidelines are for the Voucher Scheme 2023, from Monday, 2nd October 2023 to 15th December 2023 with completion of interpreting assignments by 31st December 2023, unless funding is extended.

Five vouchers for each ISL user

Due to the limits of the scheme, no ISL user will be able to access the scheme more than five times.

Health guidelines

Any event where interpretation services are provided must comply with public health guidelines.

Dedicated Social Inclusion Officer

SLIS will employ a dedicated Social Inclusion Officer (ISL fluent) to promote and administer the scheme. They must run the scheme according to the procedures outlined under the management and governance processes of Sign Language Interpreting Services (SLIS).

Sign Language Interpreting Services

SLIS will

- Hold weekly management meetings, and
- Provide monthly reports to board and a standing item on the SLIS Stakeholder Group

SLIS will operate, monitor, develop and report on the scheme, with internal weekly management reporting, and monthly reports on the operation of the scheme to stakeholders, including the SLIS board and will ensure the Voucher scheme is a standing item on the agenda of the SLIS stakeholder group.

Reporting to CIB

Phase I Report - due on Friday 15th September

The report will include information on the completion of phase 1 activities as follows:

1. The tender to appoint an ISL interpretive company to supply interpreters for the scheme.
2. An update on the recruitment of a Social Inclusion Officer who will promote and administer the scheme.
3. An update on promotional activities undertaken and any scheme launch.

Phase II Report – due on Friday, 3rd November

This report will include data on the delivery of the voucher scheme.

Phase 3 Report - due in January 2024

In addition to the quantitative data, this report will include qualitative data to provide insight into the impact of the voucher scheme on quality of life. We will create a survey with consultation from our stakeholders.

Irish Sign Language version

An ISL version of these guidelines is available [here](#).

Summary

In summary, the Scheme will work as follows:	
Promotion	We will widely publicise the scheme to ensure all members of the Deaf community can access it.
Request service	An ISL user who is 18 years or over will complete an application form to arrange an ISL/English Interpreter for a relevant event or activity. You may use the service up to a total of five times in 2023.
Application procedure	We will accept applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • through our website • by email • by text • through ISL video message • by post.
Approval procedure	We will acknowledge applications within 3 working days. We will keep a database and record the details of each request.
Verification	We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verify the applicant's details • approve or reject the interpreting assignment using the eligibility criteria and Fair Usage Policy.
Cancellation policy	You may cancel a request for services up to six working days before an event. If cancelled within six working days of the event, the request will count as one of the maximum of five applications allowed per person.
Eligible events, services and activities	People may get the assistance of an interpreter for services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social • education • cultural • private medical.
Events, services and activities that are not eligible	The 2023 voucher scheme does not include any events, services and activities that are already covered under existing schemes or under other sections of the ISL Act.
Booking	We will send requests to the procured multipanelled interpreting agencies who will allocate an interpreter. We will confirm to the applicant that an interpreter has been assigned for the event.
User feedback	For up to 14 working days after an event, we will contact people who used the service and ask them to complete a feedback form.
Interpreter feedback	For up to 14 working days after an event, we will contact the interpreter who provided the service and ask them to complete a feedback form.

In summary, the Scheme will work as follows:

<p>Payment</p>	<p>The procured interpreting agencies will send a monthly invoice to SLIS. It will outline the number of assignments and payment owed to them. We will check and pay the invoice.</p>
<p>Record and Reporting</p>	<p>SLIS will collect information on who is using the service and for what purpose. We will aggregate this information into event types - and seek feedback from ISL user- for reporting purposes.</p> <p>We will provide an internal management report to track activity and monitor the scheme.</p> <p>We will compile a monthly report to the SLIS Board about the service and report to the SLIS stakeholder group. We will also provide reports to our funders, the CIB and Department of Social Protection on the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15th September 2023, • 3rd November 2023 and • Final report on January 2024 <p>SLIS will prepare a monthly activity report based on a review of the database. It will contain information about the numbers using the service and the quality of the service. SLIS will also contribute to a financial report, broken down into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assignments • interpreter fees • travel • amount paid out • estimated total costs.
<p>Data Protection</p>	<p>Please see data protection notice.</p>
<p>Note: The Scheme will operate for a set time from 1st October to 15th December 2023 with completion of interpreting assignments by 31st December 2023, unless funding is extended. A Fair Usage Policy applies to the Scheme. You may use the scheme up to five times in 2023.</p>	

The following pages provide more detail on each of the areas above.

Promotion

We will publicise the voucher scheme to promote access to the scheme to the Deaf community, including ISL videos and social media. We will develop and put in place a communications plan. It will target Deaf communities, including:

- Priority groups (see next list)
- Communities in Dublin
- Communities outside Dublin.

We will design our communications strategies to give priority to:

- Deaf-Blind adults
- Members of the Travelling Community
- Ethnic minorities
- Migrants
- Deaf with a disability/additional needs
- Deaf people aged 65+ years

We will submit reports about statistics and other information to stakeholders, including CIB.

Each month, reports will detail the results of communications and social media activities.

Who can use the service

This scheme is only for ISL users. ISL users are understood to be Deaf people:

- whose first language is ISL; or
- who need ISL support to use services and to engage in events on an equal basis as other citizens.
- Who are 18 years or over.

Applications will be handled as follows.

We will:

- verify any applications submitted by someone who is an ISL user or by someone submitting an application on their behalf;
- acknowledge applications within three working days;
- contact the procured agencies provider within three working days to arrange an interpreter;
- get back to the applicant within three working days of receiving confirmation of an interpreter.

Application procedure

We will accept a completed application form:

- through our website
- by email
- by text
- through ISL video message
- by post.

Contact details for application	
Email	[insert email: e.g. voucher@slis.ie]
Text	[insert mobile number]
Website	www.slis.ie/voucher
ISL video message to	[insert email: e.g. voucher@slis.ie and mobile number]
Post to	Voucher Requests, SLIS, Deaf Village Ireland, Ratoath Road, Cabra, Dublin 7.

A standard request form will include:

- personal details and information about the ISL user
- the activity details including the organiser
- date of event
- a preference for a particular interpreter if applicant has a preference.

Application requests should ideally be made at least two weeks before you need the service. We recognise this is not always possible. We recommend you apply as soon as possible to ensure we can process your request and assign an interpreter.

If we get applications two or three days before an event, this makes it harder to get an interpreter.

Approval procedure

Database

We will keep a database and record the details of each request. We will allocate each job a reference number.

Information that will be kept on a database			
1	Job number.	9	Interpreter preference, if indicated.
2	Demographic information: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• gender• age group• priority group• location.	10	Funding / Sector
3	Name of event.	11	Name of interpreter agreed.
4	Name of Deaf applicant and person or people who will benefit from the service.	12	Date request completed. Date request closed.
5	Date request received.	13	How we received the request.
6	Date of event.	14	If the assignment is not going ahead, provide relevant information.
7	Details about assignment.	15	Who logged the application.
8	Type of booking – in what sector will the service be provided.	16	Notes

How we will manage and verify applications

Assignment sheet: We will complete an assignment sheet for each request and give it a unique job reference number.

Verify details: We will check that the details of the application comply with the eligibility criteria and Fair Usage Policy.

Priority applicants: We will prioritise:

- Deaf-Blind adults
- members of the Travelling Community
- ethnic minorities
- migrants
- Deaf with a disability/additional needs
- Deaf people aged 65+ years

Dublin and outside Dublin: We will ensure participation from Deaf citizens throughout the country, and reserve a minimum participation of 30% from outside Dublin and 30% for Dublin residents.

If we reject an application: We will record this on the database. We will let the person know why the application failed within three working days .

Appeal: Those who are not happy with our decision can appeal through the complaints process, as per the Complaints Policy. See Appendix 3 for the complaints form or go to [Insert website] to fill in the ISL Complaints Form online.

Cancellation policy

If you cancel an assignment six working days before a scheduled assignment by email, text, phone call or video call to SLIS, it will not count as one of your “vouchers” or Social Inclusion Scheme allowances.

If you cancel less than six working days before a booking, it will count as one of your five ‘vouchers’ - Social Inclusion Scheme’s allowance. This includes bookings where the ISL user is unavailable and cannot continue with the assignment.

If the event is cancelled by the event organiser, you will get to book another appointment instead .

We will notify the interpreter agencies to notify the ISL interpreter(s) of the cancellation.

Eligible events, services and activities

The service will cover the following events where funding is not available from other sources.

Civic events

The service will cover social events like:

- residence committee meetings
- social club formal meetings
- Annual General Meetings (AGMs)
- other committee meetings.

Inclusion

It will also cover:

- social inclusion activities
- active citizenship events like Free Legal Aid meetings at, for example, Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)

Social events

It will cover social events including:

- Private events (*e.g. weddings, religious ceremonies of all faiths*)
- Humanist Services for Children and Families
- Family gatherings (*e.g. birthday parties, graduations, debbs, BBQ events, etc.*)
- Community and sports events (*e.g. sport clubs, fundraising, etc.*)
- Campaigns (*e.g. launch of report, etc.*)

Community and charity

It will also cover:

- community and voluntary services and activities
- charity events.

Cultural events

The service will cover cultural events, like:

- Theatre
- Concerts/Shows
- Tours (*Guinness Storehouse, etc*)
- Community Festivals (*Food & Drink Festivals, Forbidden Fruit Festival, ISL Festival, etc.*)
- Exhibits (*photography / art, etc.*)
- Presentations (*Black History Month Online Conversations, etc.*)

Information events

The service will cover public services, other than those organised by public bodies, and events, where interpreting is not provided. This will include:

- employability events
- public and civic information sessions.
- Conferences (*e.g. Political Party Conferences*)

Educational and training events

The service will include education and training events including:

- adult and further education events
- once-off or short private courses (*e.g. barista training, tennis course, philosophy training, cooking classes, fashion design workshop, etc.*)
- training events linked to employment or job offers.¹
- parent / teacher / school principal meetings
- other educational meetings and events.

Legal

The service will include:

- meeting with solicitors (*e.g. consultation for divorce, will & deeds, contract & lease agreement*)

Medical

The service will cover private medical events like:

- **private** consultations (*e.g. dentists, eye test at Specsavers, physiotherapists, dieticians, etc.*)
- other **private** services (*e.g. X-ray, MRI, Laser treatments, CT and Ultrasound scans, etc.*)
- Pregnancy related services (*IVF consultations, ultrasounds, gynaecology consultations, etc.*)
- Mental health services **not governmentally funded** (mental health counselling, psychiatric assessments, etc.)

Health and wellbeing events

Health and wellbeing events covered will include:

- public health events (not funded by public bodies) (*e.g. workshops, seminars*)
- health information events

This list just provides examples, other areas may also be included. We will develop these guidelines and specify other activities and examples based on feedback and evaluation.

¹ Where not covered by the Reasonable Accommodation Fund from the DSP

Events, services and activities **not** eligible

Some events, services and activities are not eligible. They include social, educational and cultural events and services (including medical) and other activities where funding is available from other sources.

Existing schemes for interpreting that are **not covered**:

- **GP and other primary care:** SLIS HSE ISL interpreters for GP and other primary care appointments are excluded. SLIS can already arrange a GP appointment for you – just text 087 9806996.
- **Funerals:** this is covered by the SLIS Social Funeral Fund - text 087 9806996.
- **Job Interview Interpreter Grant (JIIG):** this is already covered by the Department of Social Protection.

Other events not covered under this scheme

Those organised by public bodies as defined by the ISL Act 2017, including by:

- Government or Department of State
- a local authority
- the Health Service Executive
- a university or institute of technology
- an education and training board (ETB) (used to be VECs)
- other bodies as set out by the ISL Act

Where public bodies are already responsible: This scheme excludes public bodies as they are covered by the ISL Act 2017 where they must already provide ISL interpreters for Deaf citizens who wish to access services and statutory entitlements. The law for this is under section 6 of 'Duty of Public Bodies' of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017.

There is a list of the public bodies in Ireland:

<https://www.lobbying.ie/help-resources/information-for-public-bodies/list-of-public-service-bodies/>

Booking the service

Confirm applicant details

We will confirm the booking details for the event with the ISL users.

On the application form, applicants give consent for us to use some personal information. We will liaise with the agencies providing interpretation services and will share information as detailed on the form. This includes:

- personal details
- interpreter preference
- assignment information details (including date of event, location, time, details)
- and be able to aggregate the information for reporting purposes.

Details of service

The agency will confirm the job with us.

The agency will tell us (usually by email, text, ISL or phone) the name and number of the interpreter assigned.

We will inform the ISL users (usually by text) of the name of the one or more interpreters assigned to the job.

If the agency is unable to source an interpreter for an assignment, we will contact another agency on the Panel list and tell the ISL users and record the application as 'unfilled'.

We will remind the ISL users what the cancellation policy is. (See Annex 2)

User feedback

Within 14 working days of the event, we may contact the ISL user and ask them to complete, or help us to complete, a User Feedback form.

Interpreter feedback

Within 14 working days of the event, we may contact the interpreter and ask them to complete a Service Provider Feedback Form.

Payment

The interpreting agency will invoice us each month outlining the number of assignments and payment owed to them. They will need to detail the:

- job number
- interpreter name and fees
- travel, and administration fees.

We will verify the invoice against our booking records.

Record and reporting

Financial reports

We will collate a monthly financial report and a 2023 financial report and submit them monthly to our Board and to CIB (on the tenth working day of January 2024). Financial reporting will detail:

- assignments
- interpreter fees
- travel
- amount paid out
- estimated total amount spent so far.

Data collection

So that we can evaluate the scheme, we will collect data on:

- demographics (name, age, gender...)
- event types.

We will collect this information only for reporting and evaluation purposes.

Quality

We will collect information from the ISL users of the scheme and from the interpreters about the quality of the service. We will send this feedback to our Board or subcommittee and CIB on the tenth working day of the following month.

Activity

SLIS will review weekly activity reports, and share monthly reports with our Board and stakeholder group.

Evaluation

SLIS recommend an independent evaluation is funded and the process begins in 2024.

Data protection

We support the principles of Data Protection, and we fully comply with the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (as amended).²

Some or all parts of dealing with personal information may be done on our behalf by third parties so that we can process and fulfil your application. When this happens, we will need to share your information with the agency providing interpreters and they will need to share it with ISL Interpreters.

How we will use information given to us

We need your information to:

- administer and process requests for ISL interpreting
- link in with the interpreter agency and interpreters working on the scheme
- manage and report on the service.

² Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended) - <https://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2018/act/7/revised/en/html>

We may use some parts of the information you provide on the application form, for aggregated, anonymous reports, research and statistical purposes. This will allow us to tell our funders and other interested parties about our achievements and progress.

In addition, if we believe that individual ISL users are suffering from poor service, we may store extra data so we can deliver the service in the best possible way.

Appendix 1: Application form

Date of Application	
Gender (please tick ✓)	Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>
Age Group (please tick ✓)	18-24 years <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 years <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 years <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 years <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 years <input type="checkbox"/> 65+ years <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you identify with the following: (please tick ✓) Priority will be given to these groups.	Deaf-Blind <input type="checkbox"/> Member of the Traveller Community <input type="checkbox"/> 65+ years <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Minority <input type="checkbox"/> Migrant <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf with a disability or with additional needs <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above <input type="checkbox"/>
Eircode	

Personal Details

Name of ISL User:	
Mobile Number	
Email	

Assignment Information

Category of Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Social <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural <input type="checkbox"/> Medical <input type="checkbox"/> Public events and services <input type="checkbox"/> Educational and training events <input type="checkbox"/> Other Please define _____
Date	
Time	Start: _____ Estimated finish: _____
Location	
Details of Event	

Interpreter Preferences (please list 3 interpreter preferences, if no preference then tick the box)	<input type="checkbox"/> No preference 1. 2. 3.
Organiser Contact Details	
Other Requirements/Special Information	

I consent to the sharing of my information by SLIS for the fulfilment of the interpreting assignment and management of the scheme as set out below: Yes No

For SLIS Use Only

Job Number (office use only): _____

Category of Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Social <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural <input type="checkbox"/> Medical	<input type="checkbox"/> Public services <input type="checkbox"/> Educational and training events	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Assignment Allocation note			

Data Processing Agreement:

I consent to the sharing of my information by SLIS to fulfil the interpreting assignment and management of the scheme as set out below: Yes No

SLIS regards the lawful and responsible treatment of personal information as very important/. Therefore, it ensures that this data is collected, processed, stored and disposed of in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).

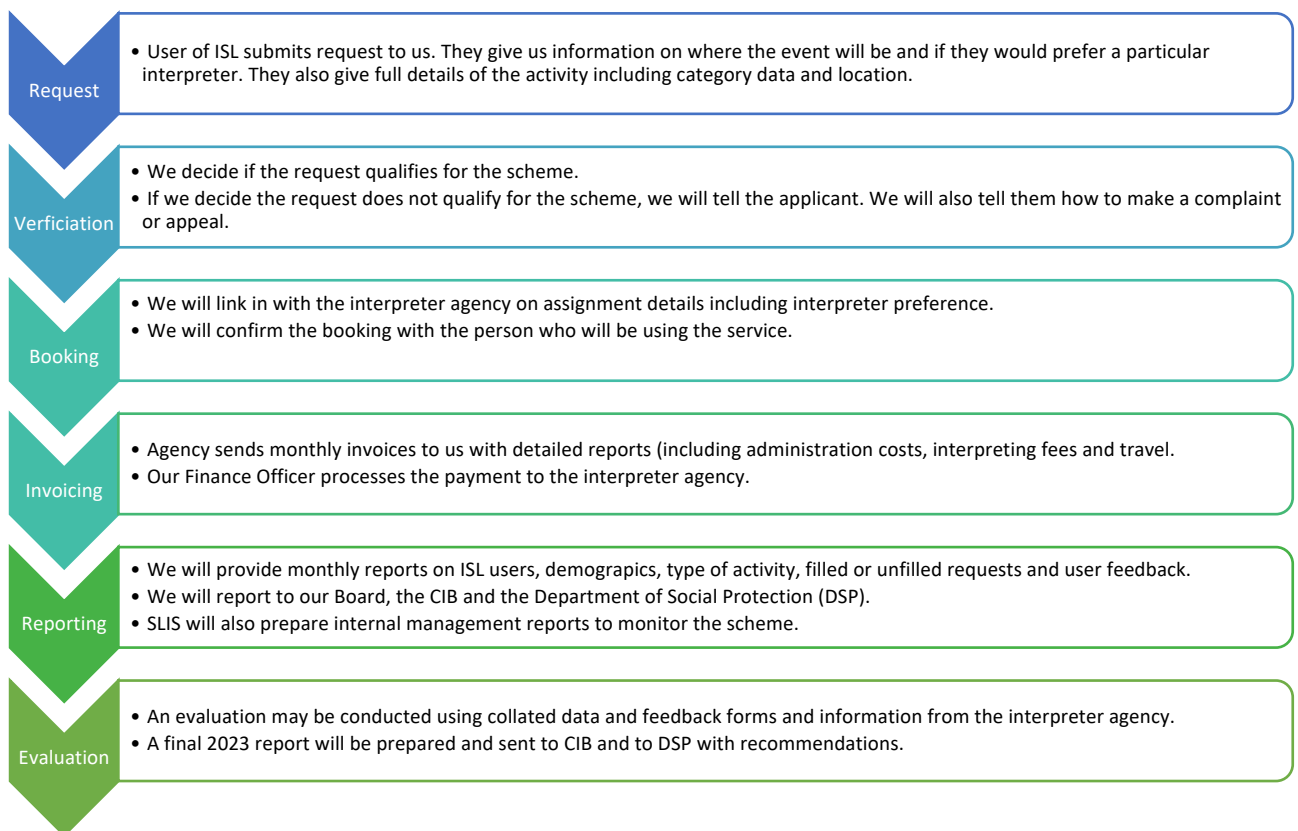
Some or all elements of the process may be undertaken by third parties. In such circumstances it will be necessary for your information to be shared between SLIS, the Interpreting Agencies and ISL Interpreters for your application to be processed and fulfilled.

Information provided to SLIS will be used in the following ways:

- To administer and facilitate requests for ISL interpreting in a smooth manner;
- To inform the Agency(ies) and Interpreters working under requests on the Scheme;
- For management and reporting purposes;
- Some elements of data provided may be used, in grouped and anonymous form, for research or statistical purposes to inform our funders and other interested parties of SLIS’s achievements and progress. You will never be identifiable from this data.
- Individual ISL Users experience will be used anonymously to help optimise the service delivery.

Appendix 2: Voucher scheme guiding principles and model

1. All ISL users of ISL who are over 18 years of age can apply for the Voucher Scheme using a standard application form.
2. We will widely publicise the scheme to maximise the access of all members of the Deaf community.
3. We will process and verify applications within three working days.
 - a. Activities must not be covered by other schemes. We will refer you to existing schemes where relevant.
 - b. Access to the scheme will take account of allocations of at least 30% to those living outside Dublin and at least 30% for those living in Dublin.
 - c. Activities must fall within the categories set out in Section 9 of the ISL Act 2017 “social, educational and cultural events and services (including medical) and other activities”.
4. We will approve all eligible applications on a first-come first-serve basis until funding is used up.
5. Entitlements for each person in 2023 will be capped (up to five times) according to the Fair Usage Policy document.
6. We will process complaints transparently according to the policies and procedures we have set out for the Voucher Scheme.
7. ISL interpreting services are arranged by SLIS through a procured agencies and administered and overseen by SLIS.
8. We are responsible for managing and overseeing the budget.
We will provide a monthly record of usage and accounts, estimated accruals and a monthly qualitative report to the our Board and as required to CIB in accordance with agreed financial controls.
9. We will collate weekly reports and share them internally within SLIS . They will summarise data on events and demographics of applicants and user feedback. *[Demographics means information such as name, age and gender.]*
10. An independent evaluation MAY be carried out annually. CIB funded and supported the evaluation in 2023.



Appendix 3: Complaint Form

Voucher Scheme 2023

Complaint Form

The ISL version of this form is available on the SLIS website..

1. Detail of service provided to the ISL User.

Date of appointment request	__ / __ / ____
Reference Number	Ref No. ____ / ____
Does this complaint relate to Voucher Scheme?	Yes No
Does this complaint relate to an ISL Interpreter?	Yes (if yes, please refer to RISLI's complaints Procedures) No (please, continue below)

2. If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone, please complete the section below:

First Name:		Family Name:	
Email:		Mobile Number:	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?			
Verification	I confirm I have received permission from the complainant. Signature _____		

3. Detail of service provided to the ISL User.

4. Complaint in detail – what happened, or what did you think we did wrong or failed to do?

5. What do you want SLIS to do? What do you want to happen?

Please attach any relevant correspondence or documentation with this form.

[Internal Use Only]

Complaint received by:		Date:	
Action taken or required:			
Date action completed:		Signature:	

Appendix 4: Feedback Form

Voucher Scheme 2023 Feedback Form

We are committed to providing you with the best service experience possible, so we welcome your comments. *If you want to see a signed ISL version of this form, please email [insert email] or text [insert mobile number]. Thank you.*

Please write down the Reference Number of booking ____ / _____

Date of Assignment ____ / ____ / _____

Please rate the speed of response to your request.

1 2 3 4 5

Disappointing

Exceptional

Was the Social Inclusion Officer:

Courteous? Yes | No

Informative? Yes | No

Prompt and efficient? Yes | No

Please rate how the communication was during the booking process

1 2 3 4 5

Disappointing

Exceptional

Please rate the ISL Interpreter who fulfilled the assignment.

1 2 3 4 5

Disappointing

Exceptional

Please rate the service overall.

1 2 3 4 5

Disappointing

Exceptional

Please rate your overall experience.

1 2 3 4 5

Disappointing

Exceptional

How frequently do you use the Voucher Scheme?

- 3-5 times per month
- 1-2 times per month
- Once every 2 months
- Other

Do you plan to use the Voucher Scheme again?

- Yes | No

Would you like SLIS to contact you to follow up on any aspects of your experience of the Voucher Scheme?

- Yes | No

How a feedback is submitted?

- video | e-mail | Text

Please share any additional comments or suggestions. If ISL is preferred, send us the video via email or text.

Sign Language Interpreting Service

Sign Language Interpreting Service
Deaf Village Ireland, Ratoath Road, Cabra, Dublin 7
Mobile: [insert mobile number]
www.slis.ie/voucher