Signing first: evaluation of I-Sign: the BSL Pilot project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Evaluation questions and approach

Signing First was commissioned by DCSF (now DfE) to evaluate the I-Sign Pilot project and began work in November 2009. The aims of the evaluation were as follows:

1) To assess the extent to which the project has created more and better streamlined BSL qualifications and consider the implications of this for BSL provision and delivery both to date and in the future (*Sections 2 and 7*)

2) To explore the perceived benefits of the project activities and outputs across all stakeholder groups, including D/deaf children and young people and their families (*Section 3)*

3) To consider the extent to which the investment represented value for money *(Section 4)*

4) To explore the extent to which the projects have influenced and impacted on BSL provision, delivery and take up in the pilot areas, but also whether the project has influenced activity and outcomes nationally (*Sections 2, 3, 4, 5*)

5) To include views of the Consortium on the development and implementation of activities including variation in impact and effectiveness between the areas. (*Section 6)*

6) To consider the proposals from the I-Sign consortium as to how the work can be sustained beyond the period of the project funding *(Section 7)*

7) To identify the aspects of the pilot project have worked well and the lessons learned (*Section 8)*

We have undertaken the evaluation using as far as possible the Consortium's own data supplemented by face to face interviews, remote interviews and a focus group. The evaluation has used semi structured interview proformae (See Appendix 3) with some quantitative elements using a Likert scale to allow participants in I-Sign to rank their experience of the pilot on a scale (1-5). In addition we have undertaken two baseline case studies, smaller in scale than the main I-Sign research, in Nottinghamshire and South Wales to provide comparators against which we can gauge the impact of I-Sign in its two regions the SW and the NW. The baseline enables us to make some statements attributing impact of I-Sign. For example, I-Sign appears to have had a significant effect on the confidence levels and signing ability of participants but little

effect on the skills achieved by trainee interpreters who were similar in both I-Sign and non I-Sign regions

The evaluation aimed to be participatory and formative. Formative feedback was given through face to face meetings with Consortium members at steering committee meetings and through interim and progress reports. One of the key issues to emerge at the interim stage was the absence of a coherent unified theory of change for the pilot as a whole and a tendency for the different partners and workstreams to operate in isolation from each other. At this point we strongly recommended a more coherent branding of I-Sign to increase its visibility to intending and current participants and to capture the added value of working together in partnership.

In this final report we reflect on the changed policy context within which I-Sign has been delivered with a shift in policy priorities from *Every Child Matters* towards more free market arrangements encapsulated in the SEN Green Paper (DfE 2011). This changed policy context means that the pilot began and was designed for a policy rationale which has been superseded during its operation. This presents opportunities and threats to the continuation of I-Sign after the DfE funding ceases on 31 March 2011. We report that some of the components will need continued public subsidy to be viable (training of BSL teachers and the Family Sign Language Curriculum(FSLC) while others may be sustainable on a fee paying basis (interpreter training).

2. The I-Sign Pilot

The I Sign Pilot was delivered by a Consortium of 7 organisations who prior to I-Sign had very little experience of working together. There are five Consortium partners:

1) Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID);
2) National Deaf Children's' Society (NDCS);
3) Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (SIGNATURE);
4) British Deaf Association (BDA);
5) University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN);

And two regional hubs:

6) Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (ERADE);
7) Merseyside Deaf Peoples' Society (MDPS).

The complexity and scale of the partnership meant that administration and management of the emerging partnership was a strong feature of the pilot. 18% of the total budget was spent on administration, although:

> **Evaluative comment/ Recommendation 1:**
>
> There is a case for expenditure on management and administration being as much as 20% with stronger leadership and management being a necessary but lacking feature.

The overarching aim of I-Sign was to improve British Sign Language provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people. This was to be accomplished through 5 objectives:

Objective: 1	increase awareness of British Sign Language and choice for families with deaf and hearing impaired children to learn and communicate using BSL
Objective: 2	increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes
Objective 3	increase the availability of BSL tutors, courses and interpreters, including to higher levels
Objective: 4	demonstrate how existing centres of excellence in BSL, such as deaf special schools, specialist units in mainstream schools or BSL course providers, can play a key role in achieving the project's aims; and
Objective: 5	demonstrate how progress can be sustainable beyond the project's life within the current and planned early years, schools and post-16 funding arrangements and disability legislation requirements on service providers

The 5 objectives were delivered through 3 workstreams

- Work-stream 1 Family Sign Language
- Work-stream 2 ECSW and ladder of learning
- Work-stream 3 teacher training

However, there was no coherent integrated theory of change for I-Sign; the different workstreams and organization leads tended to operate as distinct sub-units. In the report we offer a constructed (evaluator's assessment) of the rationale for each of the workstreams, but these are independent assessments of each activity drawing on reports received from participants and Consortium members. The Consortium has not had a unified theory of change for the programme as a whole. This has had an adverse effect in terms of Objective 2 to upskill the children's workforce, taking a back seat, for

example. to efforts under Objective 3 to increase the numbers of interpreters. The lack of overarching vision for the pilot has also prevented I-Sign from targeting its efforts for maximum benefit – for example Deaf BSL assistants who are part of the children's workforce have received no support under I-Sign although with training they have much to offer to achieve the Pilot's aim to improve British Sign Language provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people.

Recommendation 2:

We recommend that if the programme is to be rolled out some mapping of the different strands needs to be undertaken by the Consortium and disseminated to members of the operational team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest within the design of the future programme

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3. Benefits for participants

In Section 3 of the report we address the evaluation question "to explore the perceived benefits of the project activities and outputs across all stakeholder groups, including D/deaf children and young people and their families" that was set out in our Signing First brief. We have interviewed the partner organisations and the participants on the different programmes and set out the benefits as they see them. We have spoken to:

- Familes participating in FSLC training
- FSLC tutors
- The NDCS and a non I-Sign family representative from S.Wales
- I-Sign BSL teachers and non I-Sign BSL teachers
- UCLAN and BDA
- I –sign interpreters and Non I-Sign interpreters
- AI and VI awardees

The pilot has many stakeholder groups participating in the training programmes and we have tried to capture their views on the benefits of the pilots and provide some comparison also with non-I-Sign experiences. On the whole participants speak very positively about the pilot and the benefits it has brought them. The FSLC is particularly well appreciated and valued by participants as is the training received by BSL teachers. Interpreters valued the pilot most for enabling them to qualify sooner for a slightly lower cost.

Here is a summary of the feedback for each workstream:

Benefits Workstream 1: Families and FSLC tutors

- FSLC is a unique a valuable resource as it is focused on families, young children and teaches appropriate topics and vocabulary;
- FSLC has contributed to the realisation of I-Sign Objective 1.
- FSLC has the potential to reach a greater number of families due to its timing, its venues, the provision of crèche facilities, and the fact that it is free;
- The benefits of FSLC extend beyond teaching and into creation of networks of support and information sharing – this is an additional benefit through as it was not an I-Sign objective;
- FSLC has a holistic, balanced approach with balance of classes and web/digital resources;
- FSLC training for tutors contributes to continuing professional development and increases the skill-base for tutors, with the potential for sustainability and the establishment of a professional network; this contributes to I-Sign Objective 3
- Courses, while well-received are currently too short, limited in number of regions, and offer, as yet, no follow-up courses;
- FSLC tutors would like training to be expanded to cover a wider range of topics beyond current content, rolled-out to other regions, and with sustainability effectively built in to the programme (i.e. training trainers);
- More funding is required, to increase the number of qualified FSLC tutors, to make the FSLC available, for free, to all families, across all UK regions

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Benefits Workstream 2 – children's workforce

No benefits have yet been realised. The Signature Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) is currently being piloted in Coventry i.e. outside of the project lifespan, and so cannot be evaluated .

Benefits Workstream 3 BSL teachers

- Participants recognise the vital importance of BSL-medium teacher training for facilitating clear communication and access to learning;
- Motivating factors for participants include the importance of discipline-related studies as part of the teacher development programme – Linguistics and Deaf Studies;
- There is a perception among participants that BSL teacher training at UCLAN has the potential to reinvent the British Sign Language Teachers' Agency (BSLTA) located at Durham University in the mid 1980s and is a much-needed resource; Although this is not an I-Sign Objective per se, replicating models that have worked well in the past makes sense
- Although not an I-Sign objective, nevertheless the opportunity for peer support and peer-related learning is an enormous benefit to the participants;

- I-Sign BSL teacher training has a wealth of knowledge about a distinct Deaf pedagogy which facilitates learning in a distinctive visual and discursive way – this pedagogy is not fully understood or articulated outside the Deaf world nor across the I-Sign partnership;
- I-Sign BSL teacher training contributes to their continuing professional development and increases the skill-base for teachers, with the potential for sustainability and the establishment of a professional network. This complies with I-Sign Objective 3
- In accordance with I-Sign Objective 5 (sustainability), training for BSL teachers should be expanded to cover a wider range of topics beyond current content, rolled-out to other regions, and with sustainability effectively built in to the programme (i.e. training trainers).

Benefits Workstream 3 – interpreters
- I-Sign is appreciated for enabling trainee interpreters to qualify sooner and more cheaply as provision is local than would otherwise be the case;
- Publicity for I-Sign training could be more effective. Some trainees (interpreting, assessing/verifying) received information directly from RNID whereas others found information more randomly;
- For those with no prior NVQ experience, information packs, additional orientation and specific training (standards, portfolios, filming and editing): this was a management issue for I-Sign.
- Both Non I-Sign and I-Sign NVQ courses provide practical skills which are helpful to trainees with a theoretical background. There is no material difference as the result of I-Sign
- Both Non I-Sign and I-Sign courses rely on ongoing, effective, accessible recruitment, support and training of Deaf tutors, assessors and verifiers and is crucial to the development of BSL/Interpreting programmes;
- For both Non I-Sign and I-Sign Support from peers and from high-calibre, experienced tutors is a vital component of training (interpreting, assessing, verifying);

Recommendation 3:
- FSLC should be rolled out across the UK. Some element of public subsidy is required
- BSL teachers need more opportunities for BSL-medium training and support this may entail additional public subsidy
- Interpreter training courses will continue irrespective of I-Sign – these are likely to be self financing

4. Value for money and impact

In Section 4 we discuss the outputs for each workstream. They are numerous and wide-ranging and as such difficult to quantify.

With respect to the FSLC, I-Sign shows an improvement in signing ability among participating parents when compared to non I-Sign parents learning BSL in Level 1 courses. Parents also recorded an increase in confidence in using BSL and most recorded a lower incidence of communication breakdown in their families as the result of I-Sign. The total spending across three years and all the organisations involved in I-Sign FSLC was £276,998. The evaluation suggests multiple benefits for the typical family using the FSLC and if we make the assumption that these benefits are indicative of outcomes for all families using FSLC then it is possible to calculate the total cost / family as £1847 / family for this level of benefit. Given the need to include the DVD and website in the cost figures this is an upper bound estimate and may be lowered to around £396 if these factors are allowed for. In practice the cost is likely to lie between these two figures.

In the case of workstream 3, interpreter training did not show a difference in quality between I-Sign interpreter training and non I-Sign interpreter training – there was no real difference. The influence of I-Sign lies in the location of training programmes and the funding of training as opposed to the output of training itself. I-Sign did however improve the abilities of participating interpreters.

The I-Sign training was shown not to have a negative effect on BSL teachers, with a ¼ of the sample showing an improvement. Confidence levels are also shown to have improved among I-Sign teachers compared with non I-Sign BSL teachers. There is a suggestion that I-Sign enables BSL teachers to support each other more compared with the experience of non I-Sign BSL teachers.

There are no disaggregated budget figures from the Consortium for BSL teacher training and interpreter training. This makes it more difficult to give a realistic cost estimate due the opacity of the cost data. The workstream had a total outlay of £268,804 over the 3 years of I-Sign with expenditure split between UCLAN, BDA and RNID. With a total of 122 individuals receiving training the global cost for this workstream is £2203.31. However, it is also a noisier estimate given the wide-range of programmes included in the output total. Moreover, in addition to the individuals who have trained as a result of the I-Sign workstream 3 projects, there have also been additional outputs: 6 Continuing Professional Development events in the North-West and 6 in the South-West which all

adds to the total costs which again implies that the per person cost above is an upper bound estimate.

Evaluative comment:

Workstream 1: cost is between £396 – 1847 / family

Workstream 2 – cost is estimated at £2203.31 although this is above the upper bound estimate

We feel these estimates are cheap when you consider the overarching aim is to improve British Sign Language provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people.

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5. Progress towards Goals

In Section 5 we assess progress toward achieving goals examining distance travelled by participants and the achievement of the objectives set out for I-Sign. In Summary,

Objective: 1	increase awareness of British Sign Language and choice for families with deaf and hearing impaired children to learn and communicate using BSL	FSLC has gone a long way to achieving this given its limited scope as a pilot with a target of 105 participants – this has been slightly exceeded (116)
Objective: 2	increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes	This objective has not been achieved and elements of Objective 3 have made its realisation less likely.
Objective 3	increase the availability of BSL tutors, courses and interpreters, including to higher levels	More courses have been achieved and delivered resulting in more interpreters (18 with NRCPD registration) and more trainee BSL teachers (19 so far with PTTL on track to achieve CTTL)
Objective: 4	demonstrate how existing centres of excellence in BSL, such as deaf special schools, specialist units in mainstream schools or BSL course providers, can play a key role in achieving the project's aims; and	The work of ERADE has been positive and this organisation now has the capacity to deliver a full portfolio of qualifications (FSLC- Interpreter training) The MSDP in NW has had more limited success as a centre of excellence as pre-existing regional provision meant that training was only offered at FSLC level.
Objective:	demonstrate how progress can be	This objective will be realised

5	sustainable beyond the project's life within the current and planned early years, schools and post-16 funding arrangements and disability legislation requirements on service providers	progressively after the pilot concludes on 31March 2011

In examining distance travelled at the level of the individual it becomes clear that there has been a design flaw in the pilot. The rationale for the different workstreams does not map well onto the objectives as some of the activities counteract each other. I-Sign would have benefited from a more joined-up and coherent view of theory of change and project design to prevent activities meeting one objective while defeating another. For example, the training of interpreters under Objective 3 delivered the agreed outputs for this objective but there is a suggestion that it may have had an adverse impact on Objective 2 – upskilling the children's workforce. At least one participant we spoke to reported leaving work as an ECSW in a school on qualification through I-Sign to work instead as a BSL-English interpreter.

Recommendations 4

 when developing future programmes:

1 . engage the evaluation team earlier

2.   make sure that the impact of different activities on each objective is considered and planned for and that they do not conflict

3. develop a clear jointly held theory of change designed to deliver outcomes not just outputs

6. Operational effectiveness of the Consortium

The Consortium operates with a core team comprising a strategic board and an operational team which meets periodically to make strategic decisions. The development of partnership working has also been a learning experience and a challenge and the sharing of information between partners has been rendered more complex by the need to negotiate two languages (BSL and English) and two cultures (Deaf and hearing) with their different associated norms and practices. However, I-Sign was designed as a pilot to find out what works well and what does not, and in terms of operation there is evidence of an improved partnership capacity emerging throughout the pilot's operation.

During the three years of its operation the pilot has been faced with a number of logistical difficulties and the need to establish and clarify the division of roles and functions within the Consortium, which were at times not transparent to all partners. We have had difficulty discerning the structures and the management of work-plans, milestones, deliverables. This has made it difficult to identify a coherent theory of change or to operationalise the soft outcomes, these issues make it hard for the Consortium to manage its own progress other than as a set of disparate and unrelated projects.

Partners and Consortium members have noted the following key outcomes:

- *Development of partnership development and knowledge sharing at the strategic level* – a steep learning curve but a positive experience
- *Communication and understanding of roles at the operational level:* we were not able to detect evidence of strong relationships between strategic and operational levels. The lack of opportunities for exchange of ideas has resulted in lost opportunities to level some additional added value maximising sharing of expertise held by the different partner groups
- *Distance travelled: Consortium Achievements* : the emergence of a fully functional operational partnership takes time. This is more complex when seven organisations come together to work in a Consortium with no previous history of joint working, the need to dialogue across Deaf and hearing cultures and in two languages, with multiple aims and objectives to deliver.

All of the partners have all stated that although it has been a steep learning curve, the development of a partnership has brought a considerable benefit in learning to work together especially considering the relative paucity of joined up working across the sector predating the pilot. Testimony to this is the continued wish to work together once the pilot ceases on 31st March 2011. In addition, the pilot aimed to engineer additional capacity in the hubs at Exeter and Liverpool and this has been achieved in varying degrees of success considering the very different starting points for the two organisations ERADE and MDPS.

The I-Sign delivery structure is quite complex as the result of its Consortium format: with 7 key partners, the mere logistics of bringing individuals together for Board meetings and meeting of the Operational Team are not inconsiderable. In the light of these logistical difficulties the Consortium has done well to deliver on key outputs but would have needed a longer operational period to enter into a fully functioning mature partnership arrangement.

1) given that the whole aim is about raising the profile of BSL and that it is the language of Deaf people, it would have been good to see more Deaf people being involved at strategic level and I-Sign could possibly have paved the way for this to happen in the future.

2) Ideally the project needed to run for a longer time period to enable the Consortium to progress through all the stages to achieve effective fully functional working at both strategic and operational levels. The Consortium has delivered outputs, and tackled problems and challenges which have arisen during the project life-course (political, weather related, recession/down turn induced).

3) In any future I-Sign programme consideration should be given to specifying the development of workplans, milestones and deliverables

7 Sustainability

In accordance with the brief for the Signing First evaluation we consider how the projects can be sustained beyond the life of the project funding. Ensuring sustainability is also encapsulated in I-Sign's Objective 5 "to demonstrate how progress can be sustainable beyond the project's life within current and planned early years, schools an post-16 funding arrangements and disability legislation requirements on service providers".

Throughout its operation Consortium members have been reflecting on sustainability across 4 main parameters:

- Whether they should be charging for training;
- Additional sources of external funding;
- And potential for roll out to other regions;
- The need for a marketing expertise.

A the end of its period of operation the I-Sign Consortium has carried out a visioning day on sustainability and plans for activities from April 2011 once DfE funding has ceased.

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Recommendations 6

1. Charging may enable some of the costs to be passed on to the participants but this is unlikely to be a solution for all worksteams and in our assessment some form of subsidy will still be required especially for workstream 1 and for BSL teachers (workstream 3).

2. There is a real need for some marketing expertise to increase demand among the children's work force and demonstrate the career pathways for potential interpreting students and BSL teachers. This is a prerequisite to achieving a sustainable self financing training workstream

3. While self financing is the aim there is an argument to be made that some form of public sector subsidy will still be needed initially.

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8. Good practice and lessons learned

I-Sign has evidenced good practice in the following areas:

- Good practice in delivering a training highly valued by participants;
- Good practice in enhancing/ levering capacity in BSL provision by fostering the development of BSL hubs in the SW and NW and introducing more training courses in BSL , more and better qualified BSL teachers and interpreters; and
- Evidence of on-going reflective learning and is delivering on its targets:

In terms of lessons learned there are two pointers for policy:

1. The pilot would have benefitted from a clearer policy statement, procedure or common approach to training the children's workforce
2. There remains a need for further *policy support* to assist BSL teachers in establishing a career progression route, professional groups and BSL-medium training opportunities.

Other learning points are clustered around:

1. The need for a more coherent vision and theory of change which we believe will be incorporated into their forthcoming visioning statement.
2. The need for greater visibility of the I-Sign project to its own participants and beyond that across the Deaf sector. Associated with this was the need for a greater profile of DfE involvement as a status enhancer for BSL
3. The need to address organisational issues surrounding milestones and day to day management as well as to have an I-Sign project champion with a view of the project as a whole
4. An issue with the incomplete ladder of learning – its relevance to the pilot and its usefulness in its current form

9. Conclusions

In March 2011 the consultation on the Green Paper on SEN was published. This represents a major shift in policy approach in this area. It also means that the pilot began and was designed for a policy rationale which has been superseded during the lifetime of its delivery. This presents opportunities and threats to the continuation of I-Sign after the DfE funding ceases on 31 March 2011. Some of the I-Sign components will need continued public subsidy to be viable - training of BSL teachers and the Family Sign Language Curriculum (FSLC) - while others may be sustainable on a fee paying basis (interpreter training). I-Sign has shown that it has been able to survive a changing policy context which has been in flux for a considerable time during the last 3 years. However, engaging with the new polity will require forethought and planning. We have emphasised that both FSLC and BSL teachers require more investment post I-Sign funding. This needs to be understood by policy makers as a genuine need for support to some of the less strong in society rather than imposing free market principles on these two groups.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Evaluation of I-Sign

The required evaluation (as set out in the Signing First workplan) had three components:

1. An on-going formative participatory component

2. Stage 1 data collection in the early stages of the project and an interim report

3. Stage 2 data collection towards the end of the project, a progress report and a final report (this document)

Throughout this evaluation we applied a distance travelled model for each project objective to evaluate progress towards the stated measurable goals.

1.2 The Brief

Signing First was commissioned by DCSF (now DfE) and began work in November 2009. This document is our evaluation of the I-Sign pilot at the end of the funding period (March 2011).

The evaluation aims to assess the reach and effectiveness of the pilot, considering the extent to which it is achieving its stated aims and objectives and exploring the benefits for project participants. This evaluation has been applied to all of the projects undertaken by the consortium.

The evaluation addresses the following points:

8) The extent to which the project has created more and better streamlined BSL qualifications and consider the implications of this for BSL provision and delivery both to date and in the future (*Sections 2 and 7*)

9) The perceived benefits of the project activities and outputs across all stakeholder groups, including D/deaf children and young people and their families (*Section 3)*

10) The extent to which the investment represented value for money *(Section 4)*

11) The extent to which the projects have influenced and impacted on BSL provision, delivery and take up in the pilot areas, but also whether the project has influenced activity and outcomes nationally (*Sections 2, 3, 4, 5*)

12) Views of the Consortium on the development and implementation of activities including variation in impact and effectiveness between the areas. (*Section 6*)

13) Considers the proposals from the I-Sign consortium as to how the work can be sustained beyond the period of the project funding *(Section 7)*

14) Identification of the aspects of the pilot project have worked well and the lessons learned (*Section 8*)

Signing First set out to:

- work with the DfE and the I-Sign Consortium to operationalise the Theory of Change for the pilot – that is, to define a set of principles which underlie the I-Sign pilot's actions towards the proposed changes for the children's workforce, for families and for sign language trainers and interpreters

- co-operate with the Consortium to ensure effectiveness of data collection, monitoring and reporting;

- analyse the data collected in accordance with principles of participatory engaged evaluation, and assessing distance travelled and cost utility of the actions taken;

- consider and report on good practice to inform DfE policy; (see Appendix 2 for our reading of the evolving policy context within which I-Sign has been developed and delivered)

We have had 6 meetings with Consortium members (in addition to interviews which were conducted separately), 5 meetings with the steering group, and 3 meetings with the Board and the Operational Team for the Consortium. We also attended the Consortium's visioning process as it explored options for sustainability and the period post-DfE support However, the key data collection has been in the form of semi-structured interviews with members of the Consortium from the strategy team as well as the operational team and, in addition, with pilot beneficiaries. Interviews have also been undertaken in non-I-Sign areas (Nottingham and Cardiff) as a comparison with the I-Sign activity areas in the North-West and South-West of England. In addition to gathering quantitative and qualitative data, the fieldwork has been designed to engage with as many participants as possible. The instruments used for primary data collection are described in Appendix 3.

1.3 The I-Sign Pilot Project: its key objectives and geographical areas

Following concerns about the attainment gap between Deaf and hearing children (e.g. NDCS 2008) and as a result of requests to the Prime Minister, a budget of £800,000 was made available to address and deal with the problem.. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned the I-Sign Consortium (comprising 7

organisations whose remit is to work with D/deaf people and children) to carry out various projects between December 2008 and March 2011). The overall aim as stated by I-Sign is to improve British Sign Language provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people. The objectives of the I-Sign project, as required by the brief, are:

Objective: 1	increase awareness of British Sign Language and choice for families with deaf and hearing impaired children to learn and communicate using BSL
Objective: 2	increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes
Objective 3	increase the availability of BSL tutors, courses and interpreters, including to higher levels
Objective: 4	demonstrate how existing centres of excellence in BSL, such as deaf special schools, specialist units in mainstream schools or BSL course providers, can play a key role in achieving the project's aims; and
Objective: 5	demonstrate how progress can be sustainable beyond the project's life within the current and planned early years, schools and post-16 funding arrangements and disability legislation requirements on service providers

These 5 objectives have been addressed in 3 work-streams:

- Work-stream 1 Family Sign Language
- Work-stream 2 ECSW and ladder of learning
- Work-stream 3 teacher training

Workstream 3 consists of a number of strands - formal qualifications, assessor and verifier awards and Continuing Professional Development for both BSL teachers and for interpreters.

1.4 Non I-Sign Pilot Project Involvement

Data has also been collected from two areas that do not fall within the I-Sign remit: Nottinghamshire and in South Wales - i.e. areas that represent the state of play when no DfE funding has been applied. This provides a cross-check to help identify and attribute impact showing what may happen in the absence of I-Sign intervention.

2. THE I-SIGN PILOT

2.1 Introduction

The I-Sign project is a two year pilot funded by the Department for Education agreed in May 2008 and begun on December 2008: it will be completed on 31 March 2011. I-Sign is a collaboration of 5 key partners and 2 regional hubs, coming together to respond to the (then) DCSF Invitation to Tender with the aim of establishing Family Sign Language training, CPD (Continuing Professional Development), a framework of training leading to recognised qualifications for BSL teachers and interpreters and a map of qualification pathways.

The I-Sign project has not created a substantive structure functioning more as a Consortium with parallel goals and only partially intersecting work paths. Its core structure is divided into strategic, operational and finance teams.

There are five Consortium partners:

1) Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID);
2) National Deaf Children's' Society (NDCS);
3) Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (SIGNATURE);
4) British Deaf Association (BDA);
5) University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN);

And two regional hubs:
1) Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (ERADE);
2) Merseyside Deaf Peoples' Society (MDPS).

In what follows we explain the allocation of DfE funding across the workstreams. The 3 workstreams of I-Sign are described and a rationale for each of the work-steams is then discussed. Our exploration of the rationale is to some extent a constructed theory of change (i.e. the evaluator's view of the programme theory) that we assess as being the intended logic of the programme (informed by the views of the key stakeholders we have spoken to both jointly, on a one to one basis and by written correspondence).   There appears to be no submitted report of the I-Sign consortium and so no monitoring data or self-evaluation. This is a weakness and one which cannot be remedied by external evaluation.

2.2 Finance

The I-Sign working budget shows a distribution by partner rather than by activity or work-stream. Income has been distributed between the 5 key partners (but not the two hub partners ERADE and MDPS). Total expenditure is shown below:

Table 2.1   I-Sign activity breakdown

	Year 1 £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	Total £
Workstream 1 NDCS	55,564	105,201	44,403	
MSDP		9,553	19,312	
Exeter		13,183	29,782	
Total	**55,564**	**127,937**	**93,497**	**276,998**
Workstream 2 Signature	3,523	24,644	15,498	
BDA		5,823	4,004	
Total	**3,523**	**30,467**	**19,502**	**53,492**
Workstream 3 Uclan	21,546	73,855	97,097	
RNID (Delivery)	14,086	96,780	28,440	
Total	**35,632**	**107,635**	**125,537**	**268,804**
Administration RNID (Admin)	30,122	81,355	24,029	
Total	**30,122**	**81,355**	**24,029**	**135,506**

Figure 2.1: Expenditure by Workstream
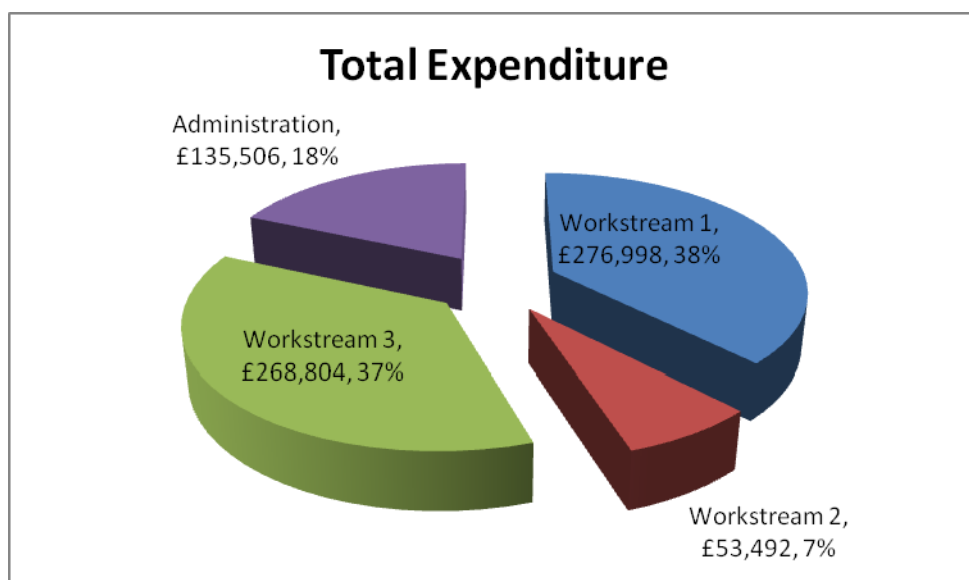
As can be seen from the pie chart in Figure 2.1, workstreams 1 and 3 (covering the Family Sign Curriculum, BSL tutors and interpreter training) represent three-quarter of the expenditure (38% and 37% respectively), with workstream 2 making up just 7% of the total. Workstream 2 was concerned with providing Educational Communication Support Workers and was implemented jointly by Signature and the BDA. Along with the expenditure on each workstream, a non-trivial proportion (18%) of the £734,800 total expenditure went on the Administration of these projects. As a partnership of 7 organisations, however, we would expect the management costs to be in the region on 20% of the total

2.3 Workstream 1: Family Sign Language Curriculum (NDCS)

2.3.1 Workstream 1, Description
Prior to the inception of I-Sign, The National Deaf Children Society (NDCS), had developed the Family Sign Language Curriculum (FSLC) teaching materials (2005). This existed in hard copy only and I-Sign provided them with the opportunity to deliver this through the following activities:

- training the BSL teachers to deliver the FSLC,
- running 105 FSLC events to give parents access to basic and relevant BSL
- preparing an interactive website and DVD.

Workstream 1 aims to meet Objective 1 to "increase awareness of British Sign Language and choice for families with deaf and hearing impaired children to learn and communicate using BSL". It also aims to meet Objective 4, "to demonstrate how existing centres of excellence in BSL, such as deaf special schools, specialist units in mainstream schools or BSL course providers, can play a key role in achieving the project's aims". To achieve this two regional hubs were established in Exeter (ERADE) and in Liverpool (MSDP) and the Family Sign Language Curriculum was provided to families from those areas.

However, the workstream encompasses a range of aims and tasks. The boundaries of the workstream are not clear and it is not obvious how the action plans are linked to other workstream aims. We believe the following actions to have taken place:

- Prepare and deliver an online curriculum

- Deliver, monitor and analyse the impact of local courses

- Enable hubs with no previous work on families to engage with them

2.3.2 Workstream 1, Rationale

The FSLC was designed prior to I-Sign with the following aims:

- To address attainment gaps

- To respond to parents wanting to use BSL (or SSE) to communicate with their D/deaf children – Signature level 1 content is not appropriate, the courses expensive and they are not widely available or assessable if parents want to go together in the day.

- To equip parents with skills so that the D/deaf child can feel more included in the family

These aims have been brought into I-Sign although they existed before its inception.

Consequently the Family Sign Language Curriculum aims to respond to a recognised need for age-appropriate BSL tuition for parents of children under 5. This is due to a lack of suitable classes aimed for parents/carers. These elements underlay the decision to make the FSLC accessible to families in the I-Sign regions in order to meet Objective 1 and to up-skill the hubs to deliver the FSLC. For I-Sign we therefore have a rationale of making the FSLC accessible. Part of this included enabling parents to have access to trained Deaf adults.

2.3.3 Workstream 1: Summary Outputs

The Table 2.2 summarises the key outputs that the Consortium claims to have achieved. This is through their examination of website hits and records of numbers of families attending training. We have not been able to verify the reliability of the Consortium's data and there is a question mark over the numbers of DVDs distributed to families as we are aware that some of these have gone instead to professionals . These numbers do not tell us the effectiveness of the actions which we examine in the chapters which follow.

Table 2.2: Consortium data on outputs

Outputs	No of Outputs achieved	NDCS Evaluation	Comments made	Lesson learnt
Family Sign Language courses for families	116 families involved MSDP (30) ERADE (55) NW BSL (28) SW BSL (3) Target 105 families	Booking form + Pre-course evaluation form + Language development check list -------------------- End of course Evaluation form + Re-visit language development checklist -------------------- Post-course evaluation form + Re-visit language Development checklist	Still being evaluated by NDCS So far benefits appear to be encouraging	Families wanting more courses, especially residential weekends with a crèche
Visit FSLC website	7,951 new visitors From March 2010 to February 2011		Positive feedback from BSL users & parents.	
Given out to different families	741 DVDs from mid 07/10 to end 02/11			
3 training days for trainers,	39 new trainers Birmingham (11) Exeter (9) Manchester (19)	Evaluation form at the end of the course	Very informative More time wanted. Wish this had been available 10 years ago	Would like more focus on D/deaf children's language acquisition More FSLC activities

2.4 Workstream 2 - Educational Support Worker Training Package and BSL Ladder of Learning (Signature & BDA)

2.4.1 Workstream 2 - Description
This work-stream has two separate activities:

- The development of the ECSW qualification and

- Ladder of learning.

Signature was responsible for developing a training package aimed for Educational

Communication Support Workers (ECSWs). The Signature Level 3 Certificate in

Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) is currently being piloted in Coventry i.e. outside of the project lifespan, and so cannot be evaluated .

2.4.2 Workstream 2 – Rationale

This work-stream has been designed to deliver Objective 2, "to increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes." Meeting Objective 2 has meant that the Consortium was supposed to implement the following two initiatives:

- To up-skill the workforce through the piloting of a new Educational Support Worker qualification (ECSW), the Signature Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker)
- To make existing training provision clearer and easier to access (Ladder of Learning).

The ECSW qualification has been led by Signature, while the Ladder of Learning was drawn up jointly with Signature and BDA to map out the different training, credits and to help define the learning routes for career progression.

2.4.2.1 The Educational Communication Support Workers qualification

Like most newly trained teachers, communication support workers may have low levels of BSL competence i.e. CACDP BSL level 1 (78% Signature 2011), which could be described as rudimentary. Only 5% of ECSW/CSW have BSL level 2 and just 3% have BSL level 3. The recommendation by Signature for ECSWs/CSWs is that they should have the minimum requirement of BSL Level 2 up to BSL level 3. Workstream 2 has consequently focused on addressing the lack of training for ECSWs - although its stated aim was to improve or upskill the workforce - and it has not been able to achieve this.

2.4.2.2 The BSL Ladder of Learning

Currently Signature and BDA have their own separate BSL teaching curricula. Like any other languages, people can progress through the different stages with their learning and this may lead to career progression. The Ladder of Learning therefore aimed to make comparison between the different courses and show the routes for different careers. This is effectively course mapping. The task has been moved from Signature to NDCS to complete after an unsuccessful first attempt. Considerable work remains to be done, so we are not able to evaluate the final outcome

2.4.3 Workstream 2 – Summary Outputs
Table 2.3 presents a summary of the outputs claimed by the Consortium. Although it

suggests interest from 7 colleges to deliver the new ECSW qualification , in fact only

one has started this and it is still officially at a pilot stage. The picture shown is one

which is a long way yet from achieving Objective 2 to "increase demand from the

children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the

needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes".

Table 2.3 Showing Consortium data on outputs for workstream 2

Outputs achieved	Tasks undertaken	Signature/ BDA Evaluation	Comments made	Lesson learnt
Research into need for CSW qualification CSQ qualification and unit specifications Teacher guidance and support materials Application guide for LLUK **OfQual accreditation for ESCW secured**	Questionnaire for people who are active in this role Questionnaire for D/deaf students Discussions with LLUK and TDA – still on-going Deaf Education Support Forum established Survey carried out with HOSS (Local Authority Heads of Support Service)	On line centre approval and registration for CSW completed. Currently running course in Coventry 7 colleges interested Monthly reports	Improved communication & involvement with NATED, BATOD & ACSW Not possible to deliver CSW to both compulsory and non compulsory education: needs were different Training package would not been developed if not funded by I-Sign.	Initial resistance from NATED and ACSW was surprising Initial resistance from CSW workforce over title of new qualification Not helped when LLUK was suspended for a time TDA had very different criteria for the staff working in compulsory education.
Ladder of Learning of Learning	Developed BSL mapping exercise	A grid showing entry level to level 7/8.	Ladder of learning not yet finalised – a new version presented to last sSteering Committee but needs more work	
Research into subject learning coach	This now been passed to BDA	Information on research	This is about the sustainability of BSL teachers.	This report has been passed onto BDA

2.5 Workstream 3: Teacher Training (RNID, BDA and UCLAN)

2.5.1 Workstream 3 – Description
I-Sign's third objective is to "increase the availability of BSL tutors, courses and interpreters, including to higher levels". This is delivered through three separate activities:

- CPD and training leading to a teaching qualification for BSL teachers (delivered by BDA, UCLAN)
- CPD and training leading to qualified interpreter status for interpreters (delivered by the RNID)
- Training for BSL teachers and interpreters to achieve A1 (Assessor) and VI (Verifier) qualifications (delivered by RNID)

The training is also delivered in two areas - NW and SW of England offering an extensive portfolio of qualifications and training opportunities. Training offered to BSL tutors at ERADE and MSDP also helped to realise Objective 4 of the I-Sign pilot.

Table 2.4 lists the different qualifications offered under I-Sign for this workstream. Analysis and output data is presented in section 2.5.3 below. With the exception of the work of UCLAN and the Level 3 certificate, the remaining qualifications have been aimed at existing BSL teachers and JTI interpreters to up-skill to higher levels.

Table 2.4 Workstream 3 – Qualifications offered

RNID	Interpreter training and BSL Tutors training	NVQ Level 4 BSL NVQ Level 4 BSL/English Interpreting Level 3 Certificate in BSL How to Teach Level 3 IIDP (Individual Interpreter Development Programme) Assessors Verifiers PTLLS (Preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector) CTLLS (Certificate in teaching in the lifelong learning sector) Teachers competent and qualified to deliver Level 4 Language coaching and NVQ 4 via vocational route BSL/English interpreting NVQ
UCLAN	BSL utor training	CPD (Continuing Professional Development) CTLLS, PTLLS coursework materials
BDA	BSL utor training	CPD

Some training programmes had already been devised by the different organisations involved However some new materials were being developed and piloted at the same time. These included the UCLAN and BDA training materials.

2.5.2 Workstream 3, rationale
- Training for Interpreters

In order to increase the number of qualified interpreters to higher levels, the RNID has provided training courses in the SW and NW to enable prospective interpreters to move along the pathway to career progression. This includes training to JTI and MRSLI levels. These were fee-paying courses. The Consortium claims that I-Sign has added capacity to the regions, but the budget figures do not show how I-Sign money has apparently been used to develop courses in the SW andthis is not transparent in the budgetary figures for the workstream.

- Training for BSL Teachers

The UCLAN I-Sign course aimed to ensure 30 BSL tutors gained CTTL awards to meet the requirements of the new Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations (2007). This aims to enable new BSL teachers to qualify as they are the ones affected by these regulations. However, we believe existing BSL teachers have also chosen to take the course but we do not have data on how many. Consequently, the training and CPD offered by UCLAN and the BDA aim to enable more BSL teachers to become qualified and to progress to more advanced levels. The RNID has run a "how to teach BSL level 3" course from Bath to increase the confidence and ability of existing BSL teachers to teach to higher levels.

2.5.3 Workstream 3, Summary Outputs
Output data from the Consortium for workstream 3 is not always very clear. The UCLAN PTTL course, for example, reported a high degree of attrition in Cohort 1 but feedback from the Consortium suggests that cohort one was in fact better prepared for academic study and there was an issue with placement opportunities instead. The large range of courses and awards delivered means that it is difficult to summarise output data and very few students have completed the VI and A1 awards. Table 2.5 summarises Consortium output data.

Table 2.5 – Consortium data on outputs Workstream 3

Outputs achieved	Tasks undertaken	Provider's Evaluation	Comments made	Lesson learnt
BSL Teachers training at UCLAN Target 30 BSL teachers to IFL registration eligibility CPD target 33 trainees	PTTL & CTTL training	End of each teaching block evaluation form given out	Many positive comments. Consortium data shows 9 successful PTTL completions (Dec 2010), in addition 19 currently attending the course. CTTL training is being delivered at the time of writing	UCLAN's evaluation resulted in adding an extra day to each teaching block on the PTLLS course to better suit the students needs.
CPD BDA, Signature 12 events completed	12 events and analysis of CPD completed	Evaluation forms handed out for each training days Feedback from teachers	Most thought the training were positive and productive.	More advanced training in Linguistics. This could benefit others in different regions
BSL and interpreting courses by RNID	13 high level BSL courses delivered 4 interpreting courses 18 NRCDP registrations 6 A1, & 4 IV awards	The teaching materials used in RNID core courses already available but were modified slightly for I-Sign courses.	Constructive feedback from participants	More pre-recorded materials and interviews with people who have done the course may help

3. IMPACT ON STAKEHOLDERS

3.1 Introduction

This section examines the impact of I-Sign on the stakeholders who have been participants in the programmes: parents, interpreters and BSL teachers. It provides our analysis of "the perceived benefits of the project activities and outputs across all stakeholder groups, including D/deaf children and young people and their families" as set out in the brief for this evaluation. Section 3 therefore examines the effectiveness of I-Sign in meeting the expectations, positive findings, benefits, areas for improvements and future plans for each of these groups as well as reporting on the experience of similar groups from South Wales and Nottinghamshire who have not participated in I-Sign. This provides a baseline for the findings.

Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from a series of interviews: either group interviews, individual interviews or postal questionnaires. Whatever the setting (face-to-face, remote) a list of questions was drawn up that formed the basis of either a semi-structured interview, based around open ended questions as well as quantitative questions using the Likert Scale (see Appendix 3).

3.2 Outcomes for participants in FSLC

3.2.1 Effective publicity

Family members reported unanimously that the FSLC information reached them, rather than them having to search for it, either directly from NDCS, or via their Teacher of the Deaf. Successful NDCS promotion appears in the form of the NDCS calendar, and email. Others reported being informed by their Teacher of the Deaf, or being contacted by 'somebody' suggesting that a proactive strategy is successful in locating groups of parents who might not necessarily know where to go for information regarding sign language classes. Once contact was established, parents reported on the comprehensive and accessible information made available to them once they had expressed an interest in the FSLC class.

3.2.2 Responses to the FSLC classes

Overall, family members had very positive responses to the FSLC classes. Their expectations – to learn basic signs in order to be able to communicate with their D/deaf child, in a conducive, friendly, informal environment, with other parents - were largely met. They all reported feeling comfortable with the requirements of the course, which were communicated effectively, either within the course literature, or in more detail from the course co-ordinator. Despite some minor anxieties over learning to sign, many reported seeing immediate benefits in terms of communicating with their D/deaf child, and indeed passing their knowledge of signs onto other hearing children in the family.

Some apprehension was expressed in terms of the amount to be learned, remembered and retained each week. Despite this, one father was keen to point out how appropriate the FSLC class was for him and his wife:

> "When you start there's an overwhelming feeling when you start with this, there's too much to do and I thought I'd never be able to … but this type of course is more age appropriate. You don't have to start in the deep end and you just communicate with your child like you do with your other child" *Father of one deaf child and one hearing child*

It is not clear from this whether the benefit was from the curriculum itself or the course participation - it is likely to be a combination of both. Indeed, the social aspect of attending the FSLC classes constituted an added bonus as far as family members were concerned. The engaging style of the tutor alleviated many fears in new signers, as did the opportunity to interact (or "Sign back") with a Deaf tutor. Signing with, and to, others helped family members to feel more confident about signing and to feel reassured that they are not alone. One parent remarked that it's a course to be enjoyed, to make the most of:

> "It's not a test. Ask many questions. You're not the only ones coping with these problems" *Mother of deaf child*

There was also an appreciation of the availability of online materials to accompany the classes. While the class itself is useful for direct learning and asking questions, the website, which is "well put together" complements the curriculum, provides fun games and activities to practise with, and acts as a 'revision' tool. One parent reported daily

visits to the website, whereas others stated they did not that often. Only 8 % of those we spoke to used the website daily (although this is not statistically significant).

As a pilot, one of the aims of the FSCL was to test out different delivery approaches in order to learn which worked best. Delivery was offered on a one to one basis in the NW and as a repeat course spread out over several weeks on the SW. The SW also offered weekends with a crèche which they found to be the most successful for this locality. Ability to learn impacts on effectiveness of I-Sign in achieving its objectives as some commented that the course was perhaps *too* intense, with a lot to cover in the time (even though the days were very long), and that more breaks might help. However, the relaxed and engaging style of the tutor helped alleviate any fears.

A key feature of the course was its provision of a crèche. This meant parents were able to attend as a couple, or family members as a group, to relax and concentrate on their own learning, knowing that their children were well looked after and having fun. This may be seen as general good practice in courses for families but for I-Sign in the SW it appears to have helped more effective learning. Choice of venue also received very positive comments. Family members appreciated the pleasant venues that did not feel intimidating, but welcoming. Overall, if brief, feedback on teaching was that the tutors were excellent. There were very few negative comments on the course. The main regret was that the course itself is so short, with no 'next stage', or "I-Sign Two!"

3.2.3 Benefits of attending the FSLC classes

The general consensus was that the class was hugely beneficial. Without it, parents said they would end up feeling very frustrated in trying to communicate with their D/deaf child. Learning appropriate, family-oriented signs, learning the signs for feelings, for numbers, for home-centred vocabulary, has given them the confidence to follow their instincts and the means to communicate with their child with more fluency, "to think more visually." Communication ranges from reading with their child, talking about feelings, gaining their child's attention, teaching their baby some signs, to understanding their child's requests.

Even those parents who had previously attended other sign language courses said they appreciated and benefited from a course that covered family/children focussed

vocabulary and a family-orientated approach. One parent also commented that it also provided a better understanding of her child's experience "in this deaf world."

The fact that the course was free was a huge advantage. While it was acknowledged that there would always be parents or families who would be willing to pay, some felt that a fee would mean lower attendance, with many families losing out by not getting "the benefit of BSL in the home". There was finally a unanimous plea for more free, accessible classes, with a level progression structure that builds on the FSLC.

Overall feedback on the FSLC course was positive. Suggestions for the future included a more prominent distance learning aspect, in order to "get everyone to the same level before they take the course" and for the FSLC to be made available through a variety of organisations, not just NDCS (no reasons given). One parent wished for more provision for home visits from Deaf adults, in addition to sign language classes. This is not covered by FSLC.

3.2.4 NDCS staff views: impact on participants
Qualitative interviews were carried out with key NDCS representatives with responsibilities for I-Sign and FSLC.

3.2.4.1 Expectations
NDCS expectations regarding the FSLC were practical. At their simplest, they were i) a website, ii) a DVD and iii) some courses for 105 participants. As with any technological resources, it was anticipated that, as things tend to move on so quickly, the DVD/website would meet expectations, but may have a limited shelf-life. This obviously raises issues about sustainability and is one element designed not to last into the long term. The Consortium have been explicit about I-Sign consisting of durable components and components with a limited duration.

The positive responses by families to the courses in the course evaluations exceeded early expectations. Any concerns about not recruiting enough families to FSLC courses were soon alleviated as the existing NDCS membership base proved a robust enough structure from which to make effective contact with the projected number of families. NDCS promoted and recruited for the FSLC via its magazine, website and helpline.

NDCS gave two regional organisations, ERADE in the SW and MSDP in the NW the curriculum and allowed them to host the events. It was difficult to anticipate how each would take up and roll-out the delivery of the FSLC in their particular regions. This could be attributed to geographical/demographical features, or to degrees of effective and existing links with colleagues and organisations in each region.

3.2.4.2 Benefits

For NDCS there are clearly very many benefits associated with the FSLC. At its simplest, in the two regions it addressed the lack of opportunities available for parents who wish to learn to sign with their children. While Level One in BSL is available in both regions in local colleges, there are several issues here:

- The content is not felt to be appropriate for parents with young D/deaf children;
- Level One courses are not widely available, accessible and run at appropriate times;
- Level One courses are expensive.

The FSLC has created opportunities for emotional support for families through contact with other parents and siblings, and through the creation of support networks among those who attend FSLC. Another benefit of the FSLC has been the course material, focused on age-appropriate signs and the benefits of learning 'live' with a Deaf tutor, who acts as a language model and role model. The DVD and website are useful, free, back-up reference resources once they were made available.

The website and DVD are available to anyone, and (at the time of data collection, the website had received 7,952 hits since March 2010 and a total of 741 DVDs had been sent out). However this number of hits is relatively low and there is no record of registered users.

3.3 Non I-Sign BSL learners – S Wales

A small amount of data was also gathered from parents attending BSL classes (signing-singing classes as well as BSL Level One) in S.Wales not targeted by I-Sign. Their responses largely complement those of families on the FSLC courses:

- They use signs with their children daily, having been encouraged by their Teacher of the Deaf to sign at home;
- They value the importance of communication (that signing provides) when their children are young;
- They can see the difference it has made in terms of family communication and language learning;
- They would encourage other parents to attend similar classes;
- They would like more or further opportunities to practise their BSL with other learners in the area.

Consequently, I-Sign participants and Non-I-Sign parents had very similar communication experiences. This suggests that I-Sign may not have had as strong an effect on families as anticipated. It is worth noting here, however, that these parents generally reported no contact with other parents of young D/deaf children in their signing classes – a notable difference from those attending I-Sign FSCL classes. This is unsurprising as BSL Level 1 classes recruit students from the general public. However, the social contact is a clear added value although not covered by I-Sign's Objective 1. Parents in S Wales also commented that their BSL classes were orientated much more towards adult signing; "very adult based" and suggested that the class could be more child-directed, with a wider range of vocabulary for everyday family communication.

NOTE: None of these parents had seen or made use of the FSLC website. They also had no idea that BSL/FSLC courses might be offered to families for free

3.4 FSLC tutors

3.4.1 Expectations
FSLC tutors largely enrolled on the training because of a perceived gap in their experience as Deaf tutor, i.e. honing their skills and developing their confidence to work with families and children, rather than adult individuals (the traditional model of a BSL class). They received appropriate and useful information before the training. Their expectations of the training fit with their needs, resulting in a general feeling of positive anticipation of the course. As continuing professional development, the training reinforced and revisited many of the teaching skills the tutors already had, such as evaluating successful and unsuccessful teaching strategies, gaining and monitoring parent feedback and so on.

3.4.2 Positives
Overall, the training met expectations and requirements, "really good, really useful." The materials and resources were highly visual and accessible, resulting in improved confidence to work with the material. Early indications also suggest that FSLC tutor team-managers viewed the training as extremely worthwhile, adding new skills and experiences to the FSLC tutors' CVs. The FSLC, although not a teaching 'qualification' *per se*, has increased the portfolio of available classes in BSL in the SW and NW, and has enabled 9 BSL tutors to teach at this level.

3.4.3 Benefits
Tutors reported that they felt confident having learned how to use the FSLC materials – specifically tailored – with parents and families. In addition, the training offered the time and space in which to share learning and teaching experiences with others on the course, thereby creating a sense of a *network of tutors*. Tutors also emphasised that they would recommend the training to others. It could be said that increasing the number of BSL teachers able to teach at this level has contributed to I-Sign's objective 3 but the numbers are very small.

3.4.3 Improvements
Suggestions for improvements fall largely into the category of developing, extended and broadening the training. One tutor expressed a desire to learn more about different ways of teaching different people within the family and increasing the vocabulary to meet different people's individual needs. The FSLC has the potential to expand and cover signs for very young children (i.e. BabySigns) and for a range of family members (from different backgrounds). Another suggestion was to build on the social, networking aspect of the training by holding regular, professional-peer-group meetings.

3.4.4 Future
Tutors recognise the benefits the FSLC offers them as individual tutors, and the profession of BSL teachers. This can be seen not only in terms of rolling out the training to other regions, and for continuing to fund FSLC courses for BSL teachers, but also to recognise the need for a more holistic approach to developing the profession of BSL tutors. As part of I-Sign, the instigation of training to teach the curriculum is valuable in meeting Objective 1. FSLC tutors also claim personal development which is not a specific aim of I-Sign *per se*:

> "I think it is important for all BSL tutors to know about their own language and culture; it is important for them to do Deaf Studies so that if people ask questions, they know how to give the right answer."

As with all other participants FSLC tutors also express a hope and demand for continued and further funding in order to continue the work of I-Sign, the FSLC and BSL tutors for families with D/deaf children. The training was, in one area at least, a one-day event. This needs to be built on, developed and expanded in content and duration.

3.4.7 Summary of key points – Workstream FSLC

- FSLC is a unique and valuable resource as it is focused on families, young children and teaches appropriate topics and vocabulary;
- FSLC has the potential to reach a greater number of families due to its timing, its venues, the provision of crèche facilities, and the fact that it is free;
- The benefits of FSLC extend beyond teaching and into creations of networks of support and information sharing – this is an additional benefit, not an I-Sign objective;
- FSLC has a holistic, balanced approach with balance of classes and web/digital resources;
- FSLC training for tutors contributes to continuing professional development and increases the skill-base for tutors, with the potential for sustainability and the establishment of a professional network;
- Courses, while well-received, are currently too short, limited in number of regions, and offer, as yet, no follow-up courses;
- Training for tutors should be expanded to cover a wider range of topics beyond current content, rolled-out to other regions, and with sustainability effectively built in to the programme (i.e. training trainers);
- More funding is required, to increase the number of qualified FSLC teachers, to make the FSLC available, for free, to all families, across all UK regions.

3.5 BSL Teachers , Workstream 3 (UCLAN, BDA and RNID)

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected by face-to-face interviews carried out by a Deaf researcher proficient in her first language (BSL). The interviews were filmed and later transcribed. The interviews were semi-structured and BSL teachers were also asked to rate their experiences of I-Sign courses.

3.5.1 Expectations

Most of the BSL teachers interviewed said that they learned of the course from their friends or from trainers. Most were already teaching at colleges or at different establishments, such as universities, and wanted to gain qualifications that would help them in their work. Some BSL teachers saw this as an opportunity to build up their teaching skills. One person said it was because it was free.

3.5.2 Benefits

When asked what was good about doing the course, most said that while it was about knowing how to evaluate their teaching, the most important aspect was learning more about themselves and their language. This could be seen as part of their confidence building, especially if the course was led by a Deaf trainer. This is important especially if some of the BSL teachers did not necessarily 'succeed' at school; finding something that they could do well could be seen as a real boost to their confidence. In a way this could be seen as opening a door to learning, in addition to meeting other people similar to themselves and making new friends in different areas. For some people it was important that they could earn a qualification that would enable them to become BSL teachers.

3.5.3 Improvements

When asked what they liked the least about their training course, most felt it was not enough and wanted more.

3.5.4 Positives

Perhaps the most important thing about a course led by Deaf trainers is the effect this has on their students' confidence levels and ability to feel comfortable in asking questions. BSL teachers all said that this is something they may not have been able to do quite so easily if they had they been placed on a mainstream course, even with an interpreter present. One person mentioned the importance of increased respect for their BSL teaching. This is important as the BSL teacher described the learning as 'clear': this is because this training was delivered in their first language. BSL teachers have particularly enjoyed learning about BSL Linguistics and Deaf Issues and found classroom management topics useful. One person described how he was suddenly thirsty for knowledge about his language. Some reported how good it was to share their experiences with other Deaf people; having access to the Deaf peer group as well. For most of them working in colleges can be quite isolating particularly if they are the only BSL tutor at the college, so the opportunity to share their materials and ideas is usually

rare. The I-Sign Objective 3 " to increase the availability of BSL tutors, courses and interpreters, including to higher levels", is not met by peer support nor by increase in teacher confidence . However these may be seen as soft outcomes on a trajectory towards increasing both the number of BSL teachers and their ability to teach to higher levels.

3.5.5 Future

When asked if they felt if they had enough support from their trainers or from their peer group, one person stated that she would have liked the training and peer support to *continue*. She would recommend the course to others.

3.5.6 Benefits for participants

The staff at UCLAN and BDA were asked about the benefits of the training courses for participants. In their responses they stressed the difficulties of students historically being excluded from training because of lower literacy levels, while nevertheless having the intellectual ability to succeed. The provision of basic literacy training was advocated alongside study skills to facilitate better access for the students enrolled on the course. The aim is to nurture students along a pathway, with peer support, to enable them to realise their potential. Sign Bilingualism is an important component of this ethos using English (in reading and writing) and in Sign Language.

There appears to be a considerable repository of Deaf knowledge in UCLAN about the most effective way of teaching Deaf students. Some of this knowledge predates I-Sign, although inevitably the I-Sign experience will add additional evidence about what works best in teaching this group in order to confirm what is already known. Much of this knowledge is tacit, yet worthy of consolidation in a format that can be shared with a wider group.

The BSL teacher group is one which is in need of further targeted support of the kind I-Sign has begun to offer. The participants genuinely appreciate the time invested in them, and evidence a desire for further training where this can be arranged

3.5.7 Summary of key points – Workstream 3 training BSL teachers

- Recognition of the vital importance of BSL-medium teacher training for facilitating clear communication and access to learning;

- Motivating factors for participants - importance of discipline-related studies as part of the teacher development programme – Linguistics and Deaf Studies;

- A perception among participants that BSL teacher training at UCLAN has the potential to reinvent BSLTA located at Durham University in the mid 1980s and is a much-needed resource;

- Although not an I-Sign objective, nevertheless the opportunity for peer support and peer-related learning is an enormous benefit to the participants;

- I-Sign BSL teacher training has a wealth of knowledge about a distinct Deaf pedagogy which facilitates learning in a distinctive visual and discursive way – this pedagogy is not fully understood or articulated outside the Deaf world;

- I-Sign BSL teacher training contributes to their continuing professional development and increases the skill-base for teachers, with the potential for sustainability and the establishment of a professional network;

- Training for BSL teachers should be expanded to cover a wider range of topics beyond current content, rolled-out to other regions, and with sustainability effectively built in to the programme (i.e. training trainers).

3.6 Non –I-Sign teachers South Wales and Nottinghamshire

We interviewed a number of BSL teachers from Cardiff and Nottingham to identify any points of comparison between the treatment and non-treatment regions. As with the BSL teachers involved with I-Sign pilot project, the non I-Sign BSL teachers were interviewed by a native Deaf interviewer.

3.6.1 Evaluation of training experience

Some teachers remembered when they attended BSLTA. They found this to be a "truly amazing experience" as it is probably the first of its kind where the teaching was Deaf-led. Some have continued as teachers to this day. Others spoke about their experiences doing City and Guilds 730 courses at their local colleges with the support of interpreters

3.6.2 Evaluation of Learning experiences

When asked how they felt when first starting on a course, this is what they had to say about their experiences. Perhaps not surprisingly, writing was an issue for those who were not comfortable with English. The experience of having to do 'mock' teaching in front of others on the City and Guilds 730 courses seriously undermined their confidence levels. This differs from the I-Sign trainee teachers who have not had to

make presentations in front of hearing colleagues and indicated a greater degree of confidence as the result of their BSL medium studies. One teacher also spoke about one day training as not being enough, and too much to absorb in one go. Another described how it took her a long time to feel confident with her teaching and once she was able to feel more ease with herself she felt that she could learn more. It is interesting to note how being with different people helped one teacher to be more confident: through teaching students to use signs, she found, as a result, that she was learning new words from them. Conversely, BSLTA was an experience that all teachers spoken to clearly remember positively; how being on this BSL course had enabled them to become better teachers.

Thus the baseline varies – BSL teachers who had been through BSLTA training had a similar experience to the current I-Sign students in accessibility of the training, while those taking City and Guilds 730 in mainstream hearing colleges struggled to do so well. As BSLTA dates back to the mid 1980s, current non I-Sign BSL teachers have to undertake training in mainstream hearing colleges which they describe as disadvantageous to their learning and confidence. We have not been able to locate any new BSL teachers undertaking training to meet the requirements of the Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007 other than through provision in Preston under I-Sign.

3.6 Interpreters Workstream 3 (RNID)

3.6.1 Trainee Interpreters (I-Sign NVQ)

Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered from one-to-one interviews or from emailed questionnaires with trainee interpreters (qualifications ranging from BSL L4 Language to BSc Deaf Studies plus TI in BSL/English interpreting) who participated in I-Sign NVQ Interpreter Training.

3.6.2 Reasons for enrolling on the course

Several reasons were given for enrolling on the course, although they largely fall into two main categories:

- Career progression – to become a Member of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters (MRSLI);
- Availability/Accessibility – the location, duration of the course, and cost.

For those already working in the field, the NVQ requirements for evidencecollecting can be met. The calibre and proficiency of tutors was also recognised and valued, and attracted students to the course. The only difference between I-Sign interpreter courses and non –I-Sign interpreter courses, that we have been able to discern, is location in the regions minimising travel distances for the students.

3.6.3 Effective publicity/contact

It appears that established, professional or organisational networking systems provided the most effective means of publicising the training. Where trainees were already working for organisations, established contacts enabled access to relevant information. Other trainees explained that, without that contact, it was slightly harder to independently initiate contact, or request information, and that perhaps courses could be advertised more widely.

3.6.4 Expectations

Expectations vary according to prior experience. As more and more trainees follow new routes to qualification, there will be an increased number of candidates familiar with the NVQ system. However, it is important to remember there are other candidates who arrive at interpreter training via different routes and therefore are not necessarily familiar with NVQ terminology and practice. Those who already had NVQ experience reported being aware of what might be expected of them. Others talked of having more vague ideas of what might happen. Most seemed to know that there would be a requirement to film and evaluate their evidence, although there was some anxiety about the practicalities of filming and the "technical side" of the training. One trainee stated that she was looking for a course that would "hone her skills" while also providing space to improve through self-direction. Some comments also revealed a certain degree of apprehension both about expected standards and tight timescales.

There seems to be a range of experiences relating to how any anxieties were alleviated at the start of the training. For example, some trainees reported that clear explanations were offered at information, or open, days. Some undertook a skills assessment, and most received detailed explanations of the commitment required to undertake and pass the course. One trainee said that course requirements were not explained at the start of the training. Another responded that, while explanations were given, these only (and

perhaps naturally) became clear as the training progressed. Perhaps the situation can best be summarised thus:

> "I was happy with the explanation as I had lots of confidence in the assessors and leaders of the course. However I was confused as there was a lot of information to take in and I was unfamiliar with it all. I was reassured by the assessors that it would all become clear with time and practice."

3.6.5 Responses to the training

Trainees offered their experiences, positive and negative, on the I-Sign NVQ interpreter training. The ongoing evaluation (and self-evaluation) of their interpreting and co-working skills helped to build confidence and "self-belief". They found the feedback from assessors extremely helpful and reassuring. The training also brought together trainees who formed a supportive peer group, which was appreciated.

One of the key features of the NVQ is the emphasis – rather than on teaching *per se* – on the setting up of simulations and the gathering of evidence. Trainees appeared to be most anxious about this aspect of the training and found the practical and technical support beneficial. The pressures on them as trainees/candidates were, however, numerous. There were times when they felt under pressure to make up 'stories' on the spot, for evidence collection. It was also, for some, stressful finding Deaf people willing to participate in filming. The technical aspects of filming, editing, and selecting clips was also daunting for some. NVQ paperwork can also be "tiresome and a little confusing." However this is the case equally for I-Sign trainee interpreters and non –I-Sign trainee interpreters. It has been difficult to establish any material difference other than the location of the training offered. The training itself is not an I-Sign specific course provision and is not innovative – it is a model used extensively in the past. There is no evidence of a difference in frameworks, teaching styles or assessment innovation beyond the location of the training in the South West (but Bath not Exeter) and NW.

3.6.6 Improvements

Suggestions for improvements for the training fall largely into two categories of organisation – time and technology – with one trainee also observing a difference in the calibre of tutors, with some able to offer more 'examples' for simulation than others who give out the same ones every month. Time-management of some courses resulted in what felt like over-intense days where a high number of simulations were expected to be set up and filmed. However, it was in the area of technology and support that trainees

were unanimous. There was a plea for more technological support, for knowledgeable staff to be on-hand on filming/editing days, for better (or at least compatible) cameras to be available, and for some of the time to be devoted to filming, uploading and editing skills. There is clearly room for improvement on the management side for these courses to avoid these issues in the future.

3.6.7 Benefits of attending the training

All trainees were happy to report on the benefits of completing the training. For some, it was about gaining their NVQ, a recognised qualification.   For others, it was about becoming an MRSLI and then working as freelance interpreters. And for others, it was about being more confident in their skills as interpreters, and experiencing more job satisfaction as a result. Overall 18 interpreters have registered as having competed I-Sign interpreter training.

3.6.8 Future

Trainees would like to see more local courses rolled-out, particularly in areas where it is felt there is a lack of interpreter training, such as the South West and Northern Ireland. Colleagues and peers are already enquiring which courses might be available for them, but cost is a hindrance. One trainee offered a constructive critique of the NVQ recruitment process:

> "I would like to see a fairer system in place for the assessment of suitability for the NVQ course to ensure that interpreters are being put through who are ready for that next step; a more concrete 'live' interpreting assessment process prior to being accepted on the course, along with Deaf people being allowed to have the opportunity in having their 'say' in the suitability of a person for the course."

3.6.9 Overall responses in hindsight

- Successful training depended largely on the calibre and experience of tutors and assessors;
- Candidates felt they either needed to be confident with technology, or have the support of someone who is;
- NVQ is most suitable for those wishing to focus on practical skills (i.e. those who already have a solid grounding in the theoretical side);
- Some concerns about the NVQ recruitment process for trainee interpreters;
- Worth pursuing in order to progress in a career in interpreting.
- Training itself not markedly different to Non-I-Sign provision offered elsewhere

3.7 Non I-Sign Interpreters

Qualitative and quantitative data were also gathered from one-to-one interviews or sent emailed questionnaires from interpreters who undertook non I-Sign training routes in South Wales and Nottinghamshire. These included Deaf Studies/Interpreting Diplomas, 'old' BSL CACDP Stage III, as well as NVQ 4, and lasting anything from two to 15 years. Some oif the interpreters we spoke to were therefore more experienced and reflected back on their training experience while others had recently completed non I-Sign training.

3.7.1 Evaluation of training experiences

The majority of these interpreters felt that courses were not widely, locally available, and that they incurred high course and travel costs. Some interpreters re-located for training (particularly at university level) and most (with the exception of those funded by RNID's *Cymru Communications*) were self-funded, incurring high, even incalculable, costs. Costs were higher than I-Sign due to travel and accommodation costs involved in staying away from home during the training period.

3.7.2 Evaluation of learning experience as working interpreter

Although not currently on any particular training, interpreters reported that, as professionals, they constantly monitor and evaluate their performances. Some identified a training wish list but its characteristics do not relate to the training offered under I-Sign which is the same as that offered elsewhere in non-I-sign regions. Some identified, for example, specific areas for improvement, including: production, role-shift, intonation, projection, reflecting the speaker more in voiceover, storytelling and characterisation, knowledge of court domain.

3.7.3 Plans for further training

All the non-I-Sign interpreters spoken to had either completed, or had plans to attend, further professional training, including:

- Internal Verifier for NVQ in Interpreting (completed)
- Voice work
- Expressive BSL
- Court Interpreting (attending training as well as setting up training for other interpreters)
- Telephone Interpreting (set up by interpreters in one particular region)
- Medical Training

But these are aspirations for all interpreters including those taking I-Sign training.

CPD (Continuing Professional Development) is compulsory for ASLI (Association of Sign Language Interpreters) members. Further training largely depends on funding opportunities and availability and this applies to both I-Sign and non I-Sign interprters.

3.7.4 Future improvements/considerations/developments

The question about the future of interpreting, and advice to those considering a career as an interpreter, resulted in a wide range of responses. For people interested in a career in interpreting, the advice was to seek D/deaf-related employment first, before training, in order to gain life experiences and to improve their sign language, before enrolling on any course. There is still an issue of availability of training courses in the non I-Sign regions - for example, one interpreter knew of no courses at all in Wales, although it seems that people are prepared, if required, to travel to training. Interpreters felt that courses are not publicised well enough, and there is not enough opportunity to study at Level 3. There was a question mark over the standards of teaching on some Level 3 and 4 (now Level 6) courses, although this was not detailed. Interpreters were unanimous that money and funding is at the heart of issues surrounding the training of future interpreters. Non I-Sign Interpreters felt that the NVQ route is sometimes perceived as the 'quick and easy' route to becoming an interpreter.

Linked to this is Deaf people's access to high quality training (by skilled Deaf tutors), in order to become high quality BSL teachers, who are training the next generation of interpreters. Both English, and BSL standards, need to be standardised, and entry requirements raised. In addition to language and interpreting skills, non I-Sign interpreters we spoke to were concerned that interpreter training now does not prioritise enough the importance of Deaf community involvement:

> "Although it took me 15 years to become a qualified interpreter I believe the experience of being involved with the Deaf community all those years has stood me in good stead and been an invaluable experience."

3.8 A1/V1 (Assessor and Verifier Training)

Qualitative interviews were carried out with D/deaf and hearing professionals who had undergone I-Sign A1/V1 training.

3.8.1 Reasons for doing the course

Professionals who enrolled on the A1/V1 training, did so for a number of reasons; some professional, some personal, some practical. They include:

- Availability
- Convenience
- Free!
- A good next step, career-wise
- Interesting direction to take
- To enable others into the profession

3.8.2 Publicity

Publicity for courses either came direct from RNID, or indirectly, through peers.

3.8.3 Expectations

Expectations vary concerning assessor/verifier training, from wider expectation of outcome to more specific anticipation of what was involved. For example, one professional expected to "be given relevant training/support to complete the IV standard," whereas another reported having little idea of what would happen, and not really knowing what was going on, what was expected, or indeed that the training was even part of I-Sign.

3.8.4 Reflections on training

Professionals offered positive and negative reflections on the process. One was clear that, despite having to "hit the ground running" while not actually receiving any training (apart from accompanying candidates through *their* training – "learning by default"), the support received from all the members of the team, particularly co-assessors, was invaluable. Team atmosphere was hugely important. Evidence-collection days, where people come together and work together, was the most enjoyable part of the process.

It was appreciated that some of the training suffered 'teething problems' that took a while to sort out. But there was a perceived lack of vital information to help professionals understand the assessment procedures in order to be able to support and assess their candidates. In other words, there was an absence of formal training – no information pack, no guidance on A1/V1 portfolios, no outline of interpreting standards for assessing candidates. Therefore, the process could be stressful, like "wading through treacle … not knowing where you're going." As the process went on, however, it became clearer what was to be expected, and learning did take place. It would have been nice to see sounder management from I-Sign to eradicate some of these issues at an early point. This would have enabled I-Sign VI/A1 training to be seen as a gold standard rather than merely an attempt to increase capacity by offering more of the same.

3.8.5 Benefits

There were clear benefits to having gone through the process. As one professional put it, "I'm now an assessor! Now I do assessing!" The experience has also opened more doors into training. Ultimately, the process leads to a qualification. Those who went through the process would recommend it to others. A small cohort of 11 students achieved A1 and VI awards through I-Sign (December 2010 figures).

3.8.6 Improvements

There were several suggestions for improvements to the Assessor/Verifier training, in terms of recruiting, information and support. These include:

- Don't assume all trainees have NVQ experience. There will be trainees who have become interpreters, or gained other qualifications pre-NVQ who may need information/training on terminology, portfolios and evidence gathering, the assessment process, not only for assessing candidates, but also for their own A1/V1 portfolios;

- Provide an information pack;

- Incorporate more time for trainee assessors/verifiers to understand their own portfolio requirements;

- Prioritise recruitment in order for a larger peer group for ongoing support and development/strengthening of a professional network;

- Provide actual training – on meeting candidates, interpreting standards, with opportunities to review examples of work with colleagues or peers, e.g., mock assessments with guidance on techniques and standards;

- Consider the establishment of an online forum for professional peer support for trainee assessors/verifiers.

3.8.7 Future

Professionals were asked what they would like to see happen in the future to increase the number of qualified interpreters. It is perhaps worth quoting one at length:

> "I don't want to see anything that increases the number of interpreters unless they are at the standard interpreters should be. So I don't want something to happen that just pushes people through. So, what would I like to see to increase the number of qualified interpreters? The availability of high-quality training. And if that has the knock-on of increasing numbers then great. But I don't think it's a matter of just increasing the pool. Because they've got to be good enough. And the problem with the NVQ system is if you keep trying eventually you'll get through."

3.9 RNID – impact on participants

A qualitative e-interview was conducted with a key RNID representative concerning Interpreter/A1/V1 training within the I-Sign pilot. Much of that data is compiled elsewhere in this report.

3.9. 1 Expectations

The expectations for interpreter/assessor training, covering the two regions, were largely met within the timeframe as outlined in the original bid. RNID were focused on "enhancing the BSL and interpreting teaching infrastructure" in both regions. That is to say, they were hoping for local capacity building and sustainability beyond the pilot for assessor and verifier training, for BSL tutor training, and for interpreter courses (this section focussing on A1/V1 and interpreters).

3.9.2 Benefits

The benefits of the various training courses for the participants are several. The level of interest and uptake stemmed largely from their being available locally, thereby reducing travel and accommodation costs, as well as time taken off work to attend.

3.9.3 Summary of key points – workstream 3: interpreter training

- Changes within Consortium organisations has a knock-on effect on developments in I-Sign training courses. Effective communication between partner organisations is necessary for the continuation and expansion of training programmes;
- Although trainees have historically been prepared to travel for courses, a greater number of local training courses more widely across the UK would improve the current situation, particularly in areas where there are no interpreting training courses. I-Sign has contributed to this in the SW and NW;
- Publicity for I-Sign training could be more effective. Some trainees (interpreting, assessing/verifying) received information directly from RNID whereas others found information more randomly;
- Both Non I-Sign and I-Sign NVQ courses provide practical skills which are helpful to trainees with a theoretical background. Recruitment for interpreting should be a more rigorous skills and language assessment, with input from Deaf professionals;

- Both Non I-Sign and I-Sign courses rely on ongoing, effective, accessible recruitment, support and training of Deaf tutors, assessors and verifiers. These are crucial to the development of BSL/Interpreting programmes;

- For those with no prior NVQ experience, the provision of information packs, additional orientation and specific training (standards, portfolios, filming and editing) was a management issue for I-Sign.

- For both Non I-Sign and I-Sign courses, support from peers and from high-calibre, experienced tutors is a vital component of training (interpreting, assessing, verifying);

3.10 Summary

Section 3 has discussed "the perceived benefits of the project activities and outputs across all stakeholder groups, including D/deaf children and young people and their families" as specified in the Signing First brief. It has shown that a number of positive benefits have accrued to participants in the I-Sign programmes. FSLC has been especially welcomed by parents for its relevance to the needs of parents in filling a gap in providing age-appropriate training. It has also provided a highly valued opportunity for social contact and peer support. Parents speak of a desire to continue learning BSL after the course has completed. Similarly FSLC tutors are highly positive also calling for longer training courses. There is a clearly articulated need for additional funding to support the expansion and continuation of FSLC.

BSL teachers have been very positive about I-Sign for providing a long missed source of BSL teacher training which has not been available since the days of BSLTA at Durham University in the mid 1980s. The I-Sign training is highly valued for using BSL as the medium of instruction, stimulating confidence and providing a better format for learning, and providing a source of peer-group support and contact which is otherwise in short supply in the wider workplace for many. There is a distinct Deaf pedagogy which works well in training BSL teachers using visual discursive instruction which differs markedly from the text-based English based pedagogy used by hearing people. This knowledge is vested in a number of I-Sign lecturers and would be worthy of further research as an important potential outcome of the I-Sign project's work.

Finally, the training of interpreters component also received positive feedback from participants. The research shows that the various interpreter programmes have been, at

times, hard work to complete and achieve, but that they have on the whole been important for enabling the qualification of many of the interpreters who may otherwise have been prevented from undertaking training without the I-Sign provision. The provision of free local training is regarded as a real incentive. Interpreters express concerns that quality must be safeguarded rather than simply aiming to qualify more and more interpreters. They also call for more CPD opportunities.

In discussing the perceived benefits of I-Sign to the different stakeholder groups we encountered difficulties in the persistent low level of I-Sign branding making it difficult to recognise what is and what is not I-Sign especially where, as in the case of the interpreter provision the only difference between I-Sign and non I-Sign provision gas been the locality of the training. It is also the case that the I-Sign objectives have been perceived of as linked to specific workstreams. As the result there has not been a more integrated project ethos. The opportunity for a collective approach to meeting as many objectives as possible has been lost. For example, objective 3 to " increase the availability of BSL tutors, courses and interpreters, including to higher levels" was the focus of workstream 3, but little attention in this worstream was paid to objective 2 "to increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes". I-Sign has not for example put in place mechanisms for assessing whether ECSWs are leaving work with children to re-qualify as interpreters and work with adults. This would be a direct conflict with Objective 2 and the siloed approach to the different workstreams and objectives would have benefited from a more joined up, integrated project approach to assess the risk of different workstreams adversely effecting the achievement of any of the objectives.

4. EFFECT OF I-SIGN AND VALUE FOR MONEY

4.1 Introduction: Cost-Utility Analysis for the I-Sign Projects

In order to evaluate the cost utility of the various I-Sign projects and arrive at a conclusion regarding value for money, it is necessary to have measures of both the costs of each project and also the benefits. The cost side of the equation is more readily available given the expenditure recorded by each partner in the I-Sign Consortium. Assessing the benefits of each programme is less clear cut, as the outputs from each strand are numerous and wide-ranging and not always easy to quantify – for example, measuring the improvement in communication between a parent and their D/deaf child is not straightforward. Moreover, quantifying the improvement in quality of life as a result of better communication is similarly difficult.

However, to try and quantify some of the more qualitative aspects of each project's output, the I-Sign evaluation team conducted interviews with participants in the various I-Sign programmes. Specifically, the initial data collection phase involved the I-Sign evaluation team interviewing:

(a) parents of D/deaf children learning sign language (using the Family Sign Curriculum in the I-Sign areas),
(b) BSL teachers in training, and
(c) interpreters in training,

Interviews took place both in the I-Sign treatment areas (the North West and the South West) and also in non-treatment areas (South Wales and Nottinghamshire).

For each of the three elements under analysis, the first stage of statistical analysis is to compare the characteristics – age, gender and education – of interviewees in the treatment areas and those in the non-treatment areas in order to establish the comparability of the subjects. Following this, we move on to examine the effects of the I-Sign programmes in the areas in which they operated and, where possible, compare with the outcomes in the non-treatment areas. The final element of each strand of analysis is to consider the financial costs of that strand and construct measures of the cost utility by comparing the treatment effects with the cost outlay necessary to achieve

them. Table 2.1 (Section 2) contains the actual spending amounts for each of the I-Sign workstreams and I-Sign partners involved in the delivery and administration of these streams.

The estimates presented in this section have to be viewed in light of a number of important caveats. Firstly, when assessing the benefits of any strand of the I-Sign programmes, the first best scenario would be to have a large number of participants (50 or more) in the relevant programmes both in the I-Sign treatment areas and the non-treatment areas used for comparison. Assuming that the characteristics of the participants are broadly similar in each area then the treatment effect in the comparison areas (the self-reported rating of skills along a number of dimensions in the second period minus the self-reported rating of these skills in the initial period before any training) provides a credible estimate of what the general improvement in skills would have been in the I-Sign areas in the absence of the I-Sign programmes. By then comparing this improvement with the actual improvements witnessed and recorded in the I-Sign treatment areas, we could assess the effect of the I-Sign programmes over and above what would have happened without them.

Due to the limitations in terms of the number of interviews that could be successfully conducted in each area, we are unable to attain the size of sample that would allow us to carry out this first best analysis. However, despite this, the number of participants interviewed in each of the areas – particularly in the I-Sign programme areas – does allow us to make an after-versus-before assessment of the treatment effect of the I-Sign programmes and compare that with the small number of observations of effects in the non-treatment areas to glean a picture of the relative benefits of the I-Sign programmes. The small sample sizes do, however, prevent any concrete conclusions on the positive effects of the programmes – in purely statistical terms, we cannot conclude that there was a positive effect, it could be sampling variation that we are observing, nevertheless we can draw suggestive inference from the data.

With respect to the costs of each programme, the complex nature of the I-Sign programmes and the multi-partner delivery of numerous elements, makes it difficult to precisely attribute the cost of each element alone, which has implications for cost utility calculations. More precisely, for each programme there are fixed costs and variable costs. The fixed costs are "lump sum" costs that are necessary expenditures for an I-Sign

programme and would have to be spent regardless of the number of participants who enrol with that particular programme. The variable costs represent the additional outlay entailed when another person enrols on the programme.

In the absence of precise details regarding the fixed and variable elements of expenditure, the calculations of cost utility necessarily divide the total outlay between the number of participants in a particular strand to give the average total cost per individual. Consequently, this per person cost of each programme represents their share of the variable costs and their share of the fixed costs – thus it should not be interpreted as the additional cost of providing the programme for one more participant. The additional cost of providing the programme for one more participant will be considerably lower as there are only the additional variable costs to be born – the fixed costs have already been incurred at the outset. Moreover, in each case, the number of individuals who benefit from an I-Sign programme is not precisely measured. For example, the number of parents who train using the Family Sign Language Curriculum is known and is used as the denominator in the cost utility calculation for this project. However, there will be numerous other individuals who benefit from the DVD produced and distributed, the cost of doing which is included in the cost utility calculation. Thus the total costs are divided by the minimum number of people benefitting from the programme, hence the cost utility figure represents the absolute upper bound for the per person cost of the programme. In reality, the cost per person benefitting will be considerably lower. However without being able to ascertain exact numbers for those benefitting we have to use the more precise figures that we have while bearing in mind that this gives very much an upper bound.

One final caveat is to say that necessarily it is the case that whether a particular programme is viewed as "value for money" requires a value judgement. However we can provide estimates of the size of effects being realised for the given outlay of the projects.

4.2   Parents

4.2.1 Characteristics

Of the parents involved with the I-Sign projects for whom we have background demographic characteristics, all are similar in terms of these characteristics. In the main

they are white British females in the 25-45 age range with university/college education.[1] The parents who were not involved with I-Sign are similar: young, female and university/college educated.

This helps to support the conclusions of the comparison study – we are comparing similar types of parents. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that the well educated young mothers who we see are a particular demographic. Moreover they select in to the treatment – they sign up for the I-Sign programme. It is notable that when asked, universally the parents agreed that signing with their children was "very important" – which reflects a characteristic of the type of parents who signed up for I-Sign. Therefore the programme effects can be thought of as the benefits for this type of user.

Consequently it might not be possible to generalise the results – i.e. the positive benefits of using I-Sign for low-educated, older men for example, may not be as great. However, in comparing those who use I-Sign with a similar group who did not have access to I-Sign, we can be confident that even with a limited sample size, we are comparing like with like, and that those who did not have access to I-Sign provide a good estimate of what would have been the case for the treatment group, in the absence of the treatment.

4.2.2 I-Sign programme effects

Parents interviewed in the I-Sign treatment areas (10 parents in total) were asked a series of questions in which they had to rate their ability or confidence in a certain area before undertaking the I-Sign training and their ability or confidence in that area following the training. Competence was rated in each case on a five point scale – for example, ranging from 1 = "very able", to 5 = "not at all able". Therefore a reduction in rating represents an improvement in the domain in question.

With respect to signing ability, all but one of the parents interviewed recorded an improvement following the course, with the other parent recording no change. Figure 4.1 illustrates each parent's change in self-reported signing ability and also includes a horizontal line at the average level of ability reported by the (two) parents in comparison areas who did not undertake the I-Sign training. In addition to showing the improvement in signing ability for each parent, Figure 4.1 also shows that whilst before the

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[1] One parent reports highest education level as BTEC.

programme almost all parents in the treatment area regarded themselves as less able than the parents in the non-treatment areas, after the programme these parents had all improved and five of the nine now rate themselves as more able than the non-treated parents.

Figure 4.1: Signing Ability before/after I-Sign and comparison with non-treated
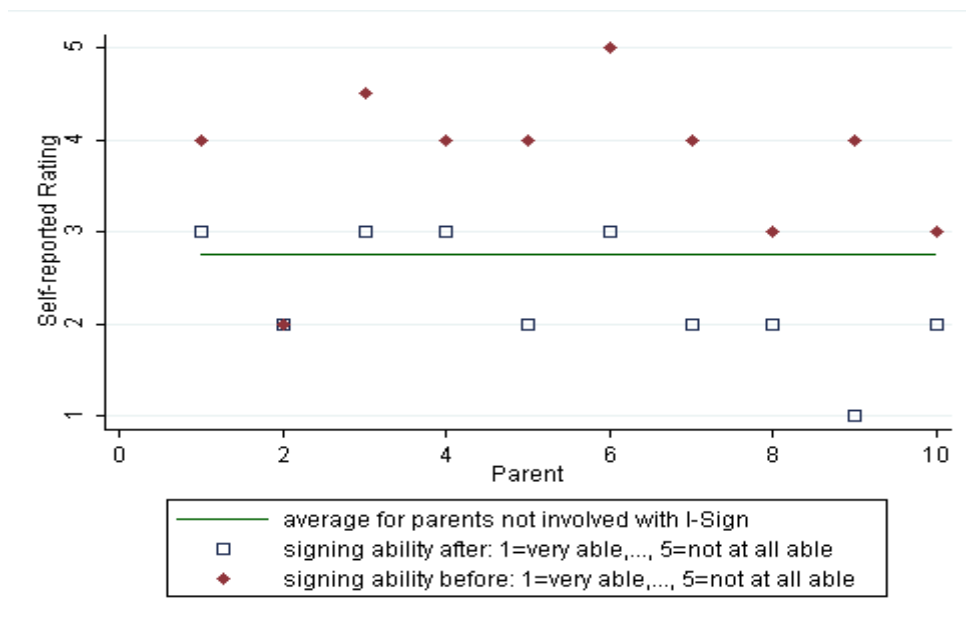
The average improvement recorded was 1.5 points on the ratings scale though this masks a range of levels of improvement with one parent recording a 3 point improvement and rating herself as "very able" following the programme. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of improvements in signing ability, each section of the "pie" representing a different level of improvement. To put these numbers in context, movement from a rating of 5 to a rating of 1 would represent improvement from "not at all able" to sign to "very able". For the majority of parents the level of improvement was 1 to 2 points on the scale which is a non-trivial improvement in signing ability.

[continued overleaf…..]

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Figure 4.2: Signing Ability improvement in I-Sign area
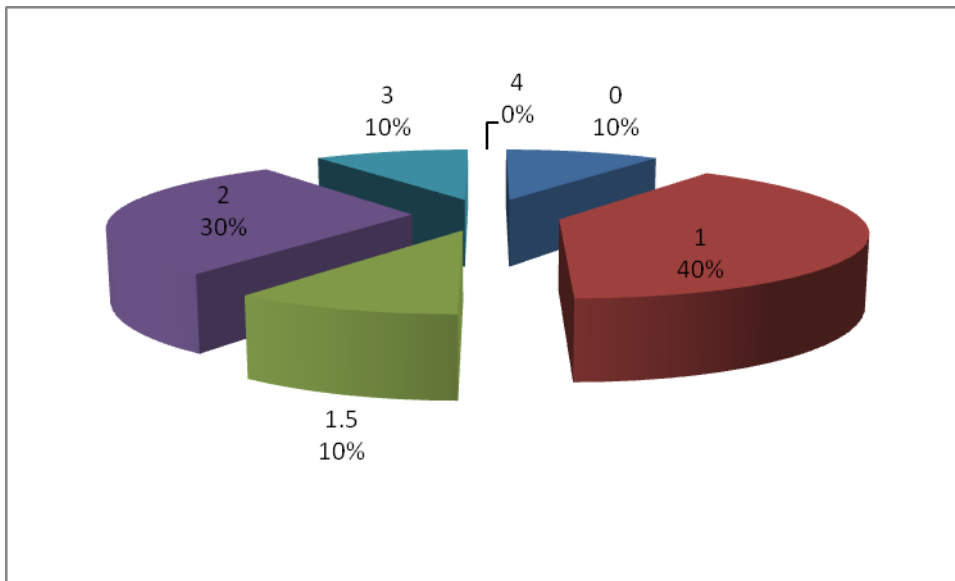
Moreover, all of the parents recorded an improvement in their confidence with signing relative to before the course, every parent rating confidence as 2 or 1, where 1 = "very confident" and 5 = "not at all confident". Therefore in addition to improvements in ability there were universal improvements in confidence of parents in their signing. In comparison, the parents in the non-treatment area were asked to rate their confidence levels relative to before they accessed any of the training that was available to them in their non-I-Sign area. Their reported confidence levels were 2-3 on the same scale which indicates less of a confidence improvement in the non-I-Sign areas.

Parents were also asked about the frequency of a breakdown in communication between themselves and their D/deaf child. This time the 5-point scale ranged from 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "often". All but two of the parents recorded a lower incidence of communication breakdown following the I-Sign programme, the other two parents recording no change.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the change in frequency of communication breakdown for each parent.[2] It is clear that after the programme the majority of parents record a rating of 1 or 2 for frequency of communication breakdown – so at or close to the "not at all" end of the scale.

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[2] The final parent did not record an answer for frequency of communication breakdown after the programme but recorded low incidence of breakdown before the programme.

Figure 4.3: Communication Breakdown
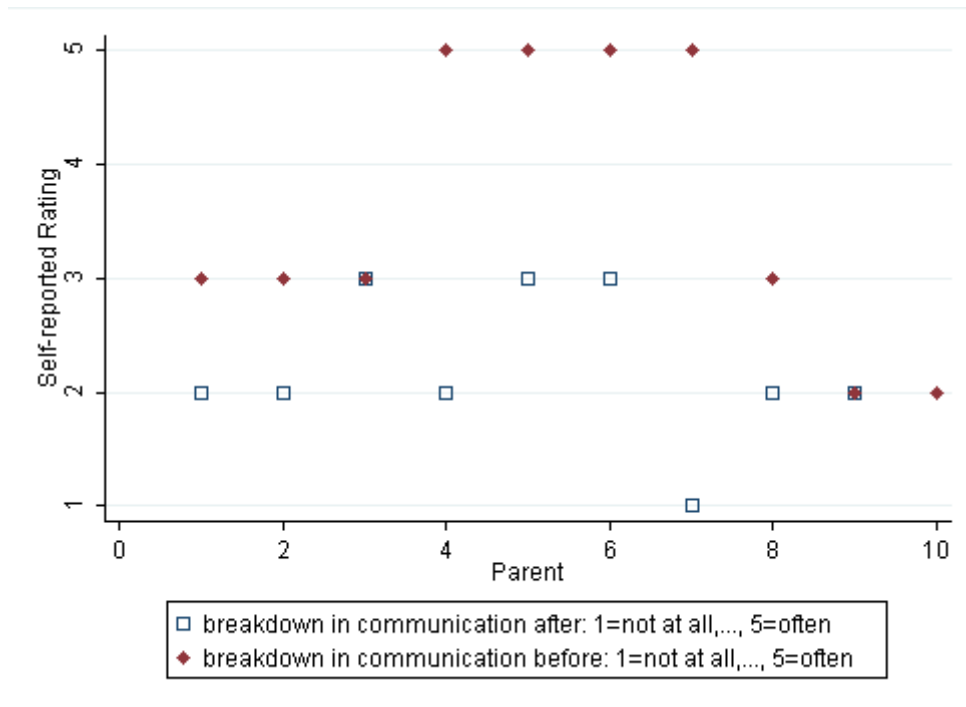
Similarly to the case of signing ability, the improvement in terms of communication breakdown was on average 1.6 points on the scale. Figure 4.4 shows the breakdown of improvements, again each section of the "pie" representing a different level of improvement. The context this time is that a change of 4 points on the scale represents moving from communication breakdowns "often" to communication breaking down "not at all". For one parent this was the level of change, which is a very substantial improvement. For the majority of parents the improvement was 1 or 2 points on the scale.

Figure 4.4: Communication Breakdown improvement in I-Sign areas
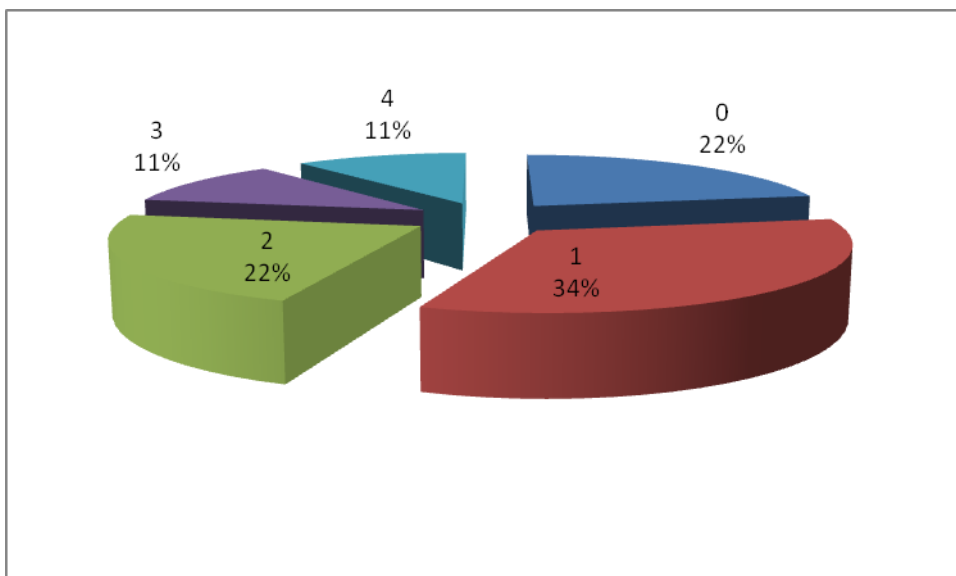
All of the analysis is tempered by the limitations of the sample size. It is not possible to place statistical confidence intervals around the size of the beneficial effects – with the size of the treated sample and the comparison group, from a statistical viewpoint we cannot conclude that the benefits are significantly different to zero for the treated group. However, the suggestion from the quantitative evidence is that the I-Sign projects had a substantial positive effect on the signing ability of the parents and reduced the incidence of communication breakdown between parents and their D/deaf children.

In addition, the qualitative evidence from the questionnaires suggests that the parents involved really benefited from the course, increased their confidence, and would highly recommend it to other parents. While this does not alleviate the sample size problem, it does add weight to the suggestive evidence from the quantitative analysis.

4.2.3 Additional questions regarding the delivery of the course

The majority of parents found that accessing information about the course was easy, with more than two-thirds rating ease as 2 or 1 on a scale in which 1 = "very easy". The remainder rated this as 3, the neutral option. Similarly, the majority of parents were very comfortable with the delivery of the course, with two-thirds rating comfort level 1, where 1 = "very comfortable" and more than three-quarters rating comfort of 2 or 1. The remainder rated comfort 3, the neutral option. With respect to support whilst on the course, almost universally parents agreed that they were very supported by the trainer (all but two scoring trainer support as 1 "very supported", one scoring support at level 2, the other level 3, the neutral option). Moreover the vast majority of parents felt well supported by the peer group, all but one scored this 1 or 2, with more than half scoring it 1. The other parent rated peer support 3, the neutral option.

4.2.4 Cost Utility

The FSLC (I-Sign workstream 1) funding was divided between the NDCS and financing the delivery of the programme in Liverpool (via the MSDP) and Exeter (via ERADE). Total spending across the three years and the organisations involved was £276,998 (see Table 2.1, section 2).

As of February 2011 a total of 116 families have been reached with the FSL course: 58 in the North-West, 58 in the South-West. Further courses planned in the North-West should reach an additional 31 families in the next few months. In addition to the families who have undertaken the FSLC course, the FSLC DVD has been created (with 5000 printed and 697 distributed to families and professionals by the end of December 2011). Also, the FSLC website (familysignlanguage.org.uk) was created and launched and has received 7,542 new visitors (March 2010 – January 2011 inclusive).

Therefore, in calculating cost utility, we can estimate that for the expenditure so far the total number of families reached (or who will be reached in the coming months) by the FSLC course is approximately 116. The evaluation of parents who used the FSLC to learn to sign with their child(ren) found that there was on average a substantial improvement in signing ability – the average improvement was 1 to 2 points on the 5-point scale from 1 = "very able" to 5 = "not at all able". Though it is not easy to translate a 1 to 2 point movement on this scale into a more readily interpretable quantity, it does indicate that parents felt that their signing ability improved markedly following the course. In addition, there was on average a 1 to 2 point improvement with regard to frequency of communication breakdown, where 1 = "never" to 5 = "not at all". Six of the 10 parents rating this at 1 or 2 on the scale – thus communication is rarely breaking down following the course. The enthusiasm parents showed for the course demonstrated in the remainder of the questionnaire, adds weight to the conclusion that parents gain a great deal of benefit from the FSLC.

Though the sample size is very small by statistical standards, it represents just under 10% of the families who have used the FSLC to date. The evaluation suggests that there are multiple benefits for the typical family using the FSLC and if we make the assumption that these benefits are indicative of the outcomes for all families using the FSLC, we can calculate the total per family cost for this level of benefit.

If the total expenditure on all of the courses and resources for FSLC translate into similar gains on average for each family reached then this works out at a cost of just under £1847 per family. However, it must be borne in mind that for this outlay there is also included the additional resources (DVD, website) that will reach a much greater number of families and professionals. Therefore, this figure of £1847 is the upper bound estimate for the per-family cost of the FSLC strand of the project and the actual per

family cost will be considerably lower. As outlined in the introduction to this section, this per family figure is an upper bound as the numerator – the costs – include all of the fixed and variable costs of this strand and the denominator is the minimum number of families impacted.

If we make the strong assumption that of the approximately 700 DVDs distributed as part of this strand, 150 went to the families benefiting and the other 550 had an equally beneficial impact on the recipient then the total number of beneficiaries leaps from 150 to 700, giving a per family cost of £396. While the assumptions behind this figure are likely too strong to be credible, we can be confident that the true cost utility figure will be between this optimistic £396 estimate and the upper bound £1847 figure. The amount of benefit it is estimated that users derive from the DVD and the website will determine how close the cost utility figure is to each of these bounds.

4.3 Interpreters

4.3.1 Characteristics

The interpreters involved with the I-Sign project were similar with respect to gender, nationality and education – all are white British females with NVQ qualifications or university/college education (all have almost exactly the same NVQ level BSL language prior to the course). The age range of the interpreters spans 18 to 45 with more weight in the under-35 bracket. The interpreters who are not involved with I-Sign are similar: white British females with university/college education (similar NVQ levels to the treatment area interpreters prior to the course), though they are older on average, with all in the age bracket 36 or older.

4.3.2 I-Sign Programme Effects

With regard to the effects of I-Sign on interpreters it is slightly less straightforward than the case for parents as the influence of I-Sign is in the location of training programmes and the funding of training as opposed to the output of the training itself. However, it remains important to verify that the I-Sign interpreter training did improve the abilities of the interpreters who took part. There are three dimensions along which interpreters were asked to rate their ability both before and after the I-Sign programme: interpreting ability, signing ability and voice-over ability. In each case they were rating according to the 5 point scale in which 1 = "very able" and 5 = "not at all able".

Figure 4.5 illustrates the improvement in interpreting ability amongst the interpreters in I-Sign treatment areas. Prior to the course, the level of interpreting ability was already quite high – as would be expected given the qualifications and experience of the interpreters enrolled on the course – with three of the interpreters choosing the neutral option (3), the other rating her ability as 2. Following the course there was an improvement in interpreting ability of one point on the scale for two of the interpreters involved with I-Sign – moving them from 3 to 2 thus closer to "very able" end of the scale. The other two interpreters reported no change in their interpreting ability following the programme.

Figure 4.5: Interpreter interpreting ability
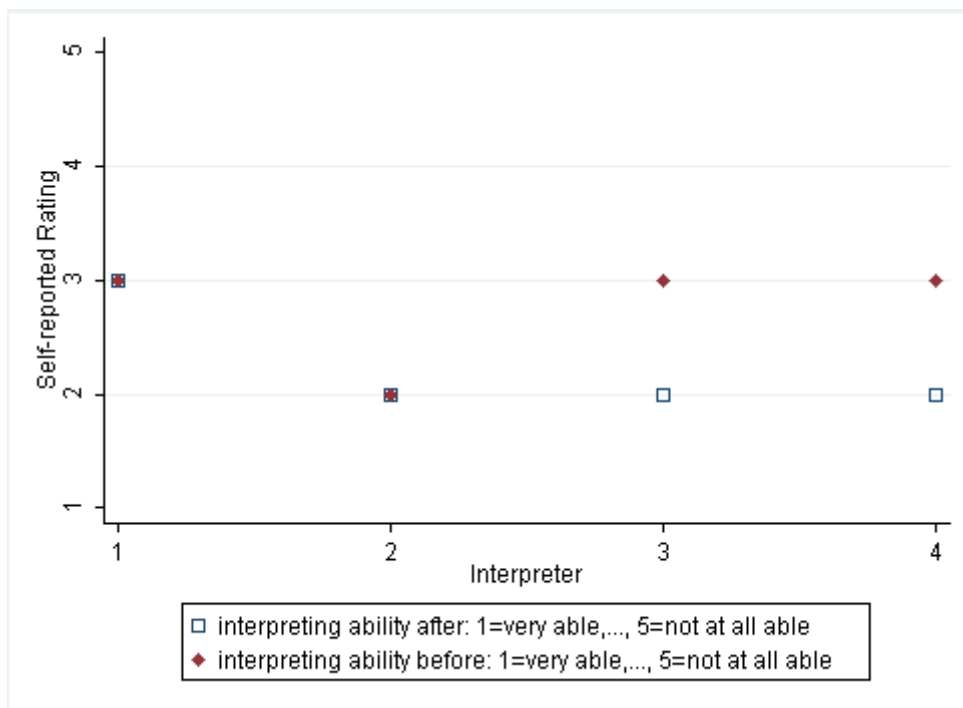
As with the case for interpreting ability, prior to the course the interpreters involved with I-Sign self-reported signing ability to be quite high – two interpreters recording the neutral option 3, two recording signing ability as 2. Of these latter two, one did not record a change in ability following the course, whereas the other interpreter reported a half-point improvement, to 1.5. Each of the other two interpreters recorded a single point improvement in signing ability following the course, such that each interpreter rated their signing ability at 2 or lower – indicating able to very-able signing ability.

Figure 4.6: Interpreter Signing Ability
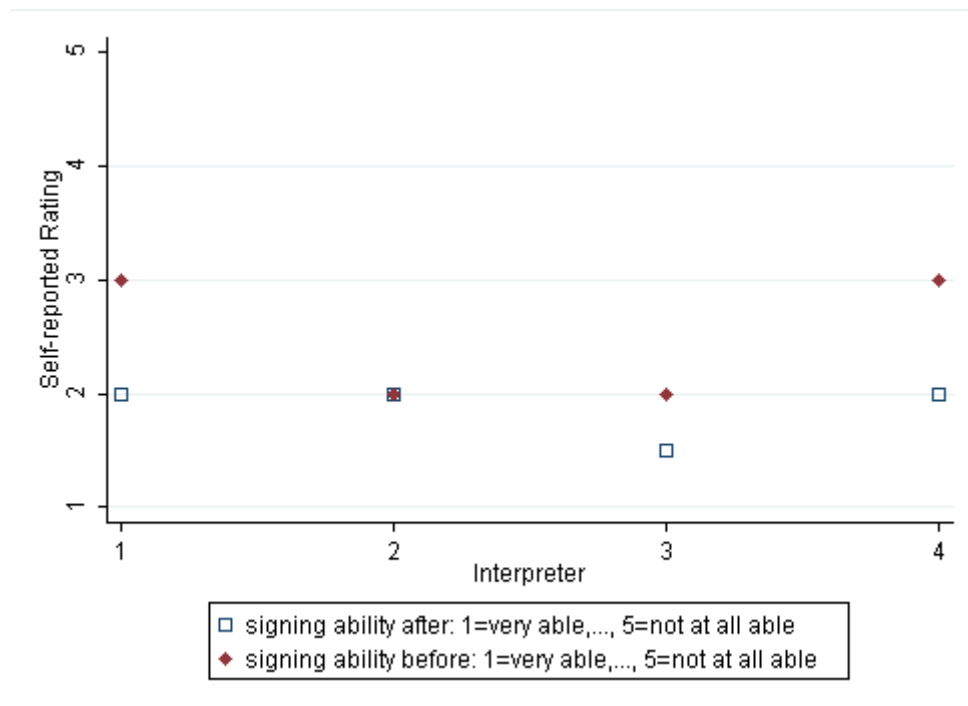
An identical pattern emerges for interpreters' voice-over ability: each reported voice-over ability to be quite high prior to the course and three of the four interpreters reported an improvement in voice-over ability following the course such that all rated their ability as able to very able after the I-Sign programme.

[continued overleaf…]

Figure 4.7: Interpreter Voice-Over ability
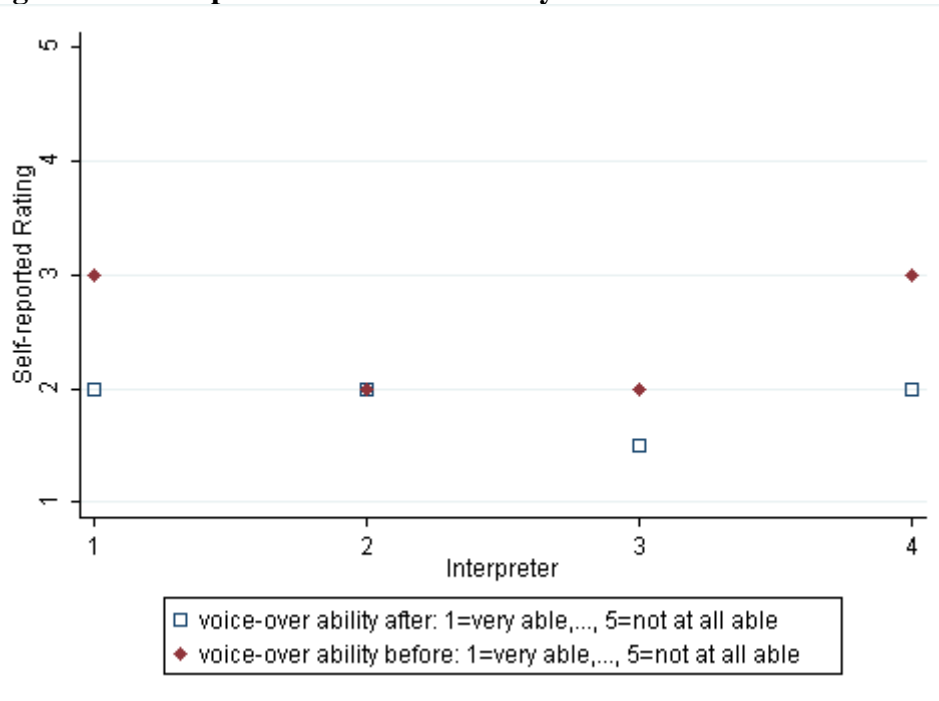
In total therefore the interpreters who had their training funded by the I-Sign project recorded modest improvements on average in signing, interpreting and voice-over ability. The (three) interpreters interviewed who were not funded by I-Sign recorded similar levels of ability and confidence: 1.5 was the average self-reported rating for voice-over ability, 1.8 was the average self-reported rating for production (a combination of interpreting/signing ability) so very similar results to the I-Sign funded interpreters.

4.3.3 Cost Utility

The cost utility calculation for the I-Sign interpreters and BSL tutors is complicated by the multi-dimensional involvement of various partners in the project. However, Workstream 3 incorporates both interpreter training and BSL tutoring programmes – in addition to a number of other resources and events which were provided by the I-Sign partners as part of the project. Therefore, the cost utility for interpreters is combined with that for BSL tutors at the end of the BSL tutor section.

4.4 BSL Teachers

4.4.1 Characteristics

There is a sample of four BSL teachers who are involved in I-Sign and three who are not involved. All teachers are Deaf and white. Of those involved in I-Sign, one is between

25 and 35 years old and male, one is over 35 and female, and the last two are over 45 and male. They all have university or college education (at diploma or degree level). Of the three that are not involved in I-Sign, all are over 45 and one is male. The male teacher has a degree, one of the female teachers has a BSLTA (a teaching qualification in BSL from the University of Durham) and the other has no reported formal qualifications. So the treated teachers on average have slightly more formal education and are younger and more likely to be male. However with such small samples, the significance of these differences cannot be assessed; we suggest that the two groups are broadly similar.

4.4.2   I-Sign Programme Effects

In evaluation questionnaires, all teachers were asked to rate their teaching ability on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very good and 5 is not at all good. All teachers who were not involved in I-Sign rated their teaching as a 3, two who were involved rated their teaching as 1 and two as 2. Teachers who were involved in I-Sign were also asked to rate their confidence after completing the course; three teachers rated their confidence as 1 (very good) and one teacher rated his confidence as 2. Comparing these two questions does not quite give the "before" and "after" that would be ideal for measuring the benefit of the I-Sign training, but the comparison can be used as a reasonably good approximation.

Figure 4.8: Teacher Teaching Ability and Confidence
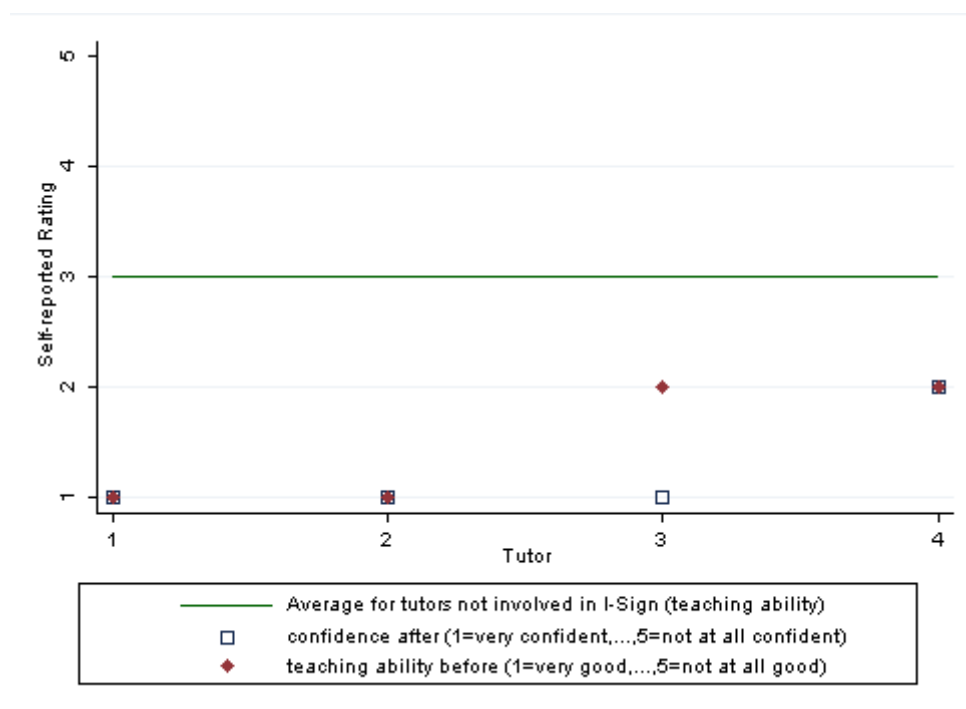
Figure 4.8 shows the teachers responses to the relevant questions; clearly from these measures the training has not had negative effects on the teachers, and a quarter of the treated sample (i.e. one tutor) has seen an improvement. The teachers not involved in I-Sign (three) all report a confidence level of 3 on the self-reported scale which is the neutral option, whereas all four I-Sign teachers report higher level of confidence than this with half of them describing themselves as "very confident" (option 1) with the other half giving themselves a rating of 2 on the scale. Though the sample sizes are too small to conclude a definite advantage from involvement with I-Sign, the evidence is at least suggestive of this.

Both the teachers involved with I-Sign and the teachers not involved with I-Sign report a range of levels of support from both their trainer and from their peers. On the scale from 1 = "very supported" to 5 = "not at all supported", the teachers involved with I-Sign rate their trainer support as being 2.5 on average, whereas those not involved with I-Sign report 2.67 on average – so no real difference. Similarly in terms of feeling support from peers, the I-Sign programme teachers report an average level of 2.25, while those not involved with I-Sign report 3.33 – suggestive of the I-Sign programme participants supporting each other slightly more. Though the sample is small, this impression is added to when considering that of the teachers not involved with I-Sign, two of the three rate peer support at 4 or 5 – so very much at the "not at all supported" end of the scale. All of the I-Sign teachers rate peer support at 3 (neutral) or lower.

4.4.3 Cost Utility – workstream 3

Table 2.1, (Section 2), shows that workstream 3 – which incorporates both the interpreter training and BSL teacher elements of the I-Sign project – had a total outlay of £268,804 over the three years of the I-Sign programmes, with the expenditure split between UCLAN, BDA and the RNID.

During this time, the outputs were considerable: in the I-Sign areas, 4 people in total completed a teacher training course (3 in the South West, 1 in the North West), 9 Deaf people attended a UCLAN teacher training program (5 in the South West, 4 in the North West), and 6 Deaf teachers completed a "how to teach Level 3" programme (all in the South West). In the South West, 44 learners have achieved Level 3 BSL award, with a further 6 still to complete the course. Also in the South West, 11 learners achieved the

Level 4 BSL award, along with an additional 4 in the North West. Seven people (four in South West, three in North West) have achieved the Level 4 interpreting award (resulting in MRSLI status). Four people in the North West have completed their interpreter training programme and attained JTI status, while a further 15 have commenced this programme in the South West. One person in the North West has completed interpreter training and attained TI status. One Deaf person in the South West has attained V1 verifier award, with one hearing person in the South West and one in the North West commencing the Internal Verifier programme (interpreting). In the North West, one Deaf person has achieved an assessor programme and one hearing person has also achieved an assessor programme (interpreting). In the South West, three Deaf people have commenced an assessor programme, with one Deaf person attaining A1 assessor award and two hearing people A1 assessor award (interpreting).

The complex and over-lapping nature of the I-Sign projects and the services provided by different I-Sign partners means that it is not possible to disaggregate spending further to identify the cost for each specific component delivered. However, in the absence of such disaggregated figures, if we apply equal weighting to each outcome – each interpreter trained, each BSL teacher trained etc – we can calculate a cost per person trained in order to evaluate cost utility.

In total, across all programmes, there were 122 individuals trained as part of the I-Sign projects in workstream 3. With a total outlay of £268,804, this gives a global average cost per person of £2203.31. This is above the figure for workstream 1, however it is also a noisier estimate given the wide-range of programmes included in the output total. Moreover, in addition to the individuals who have trained as a result of the I-Sign workstream 3 projects, there have also been additional outputs: 6 Continuing Professional Development events in the North West and 6 in the South West which all adds to the total costs,
 which again implies that the per person cost above is an upper bound estimate.

The benefits of the BSL teacher training and the Interpreter training programmes – as detailed above in their respective sections – were varying. The case of interpreters is slightly different to that of either parents or BSL teachers since the difference in the I-Sign areas was not in the training received, rather in who paid for the same training that was available in other areas. The interpreters in the I-Sign areas made modest

improvements across the full range of domains (self-)assessed, and as might be expected given the course was the same in treatment and comparison areas, the improvement was in line with the non-I-Sign areas interpreter improvement. Whether the interpreter training as part of I-Sign represents value for money turns on the weight given to benefit the interpreters themselves gain from being able to have their training paid for and for it to be provided in their region rather than them having to travel. This is necessarily a subjective value judgement.

With respect to BSL teachers, the benefits attained in the I-Sign areas are suggested to be greater than in the comparison regions. There is modest improvement for one of the BSL tutors assessed in the I-Sign region while the other tutors remained of the same high ability that they rated themselves at prior to the course. Therefore, for BSL teachers, the relatively high per person cost (approx £2200 per person trained) did seem to result in a positive training experience and this cost figure has to be born in mind as an upper bound – the actual cost to train each teacher will be lower when the fixed costs of other resources provided as part of the workstream 3 expenditure, are deducted.

5. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE GOALS

5.1 Introduction

It is often the case in a programme aiming for social change that the goals are beyond the reach of the projected work within a specific time frame. This can occur for a wide range of reasons. The goals may be too extensive or are part of a larger plan; the participants may not be able to devote enough time or effort; or there may be environmental, political or social factors which slow the project. In these cases we look for the achievement of intermediate goals, which imply movement towards the overall goals. This requires us to build a stepwise model and then to try to determine the number of steps or the distance travelled by the individual on the pathway towards these aims.

We apply this to an examination of the extent to which I-Sign has been able to move towards its 5 key objectives which were set out in the original DCSF contract for the I-Sign Project (May 2008). Appendix 4 details the claimed achievements of outputs (dated December 2010) against objectives. In this section we will also examine the extent to which the pilot has been able to meet the overarching (yet somewhat vague) aims of the project to:

1) pilot different ways of increasing BSL provision; and

2) to improve British Sign Language provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people

5.2. Overall assessment of Distance Travelled for the different work-streams

An evaluation of distance travelled begins with the participants: an assessment of their status in regard to the key variable being examined. If, for example, we define the aims as to create an acceptance of Deaf experience (culture and language) in the home and demonstrate fluent communication with the child at all ages, then we can begin to consider the steps needed to achieve this.   The endpoint would be a fully bilingual family situation with effective socialisation, emotional development and coherent and inclusive family life. Steps towards that might be:

(a) awareness of Deaf experience as more than a lack of sensory stimulation

(b) seeking out information from other families or from courses

(c) mastery of signed communication to level x, y and z

(d) report of better family life

and so on.

We have tried to determine the pathways towards goal achievement. This has not always be a simple matter as the I-Sign consortium does not have a coherent, shared, theory of change and has not formalised an agreed position on the stages of achievement towards its goals. However, in what follows we endeavour to chart how the pilot progresses through a number of soft outcomes en route to achieving its ultimate goals and end point. This defines a pathway of change on which different individuals begin their journeys from different starting points. The approach enables us to show how far individuals have travelled and to determine what still remains to be achieved

For an assessment of distance travelled we require an accurate baseline (measured in terms of the Consortium target variables). However with no published milestones for the workstreams and the evaluation coming late to the project (it had been running for nearly a year), this essential data is simply not available and has to be retrospectively constructed from individual participant interviews. We are able to draw on qualitative assessment of group starting points based on interviews with directors and other Consortium team members but it is difficult to determine impact on the participants (individually) in this way.

5.2.1 Distance travelled: Workstream 1- FSLC

There were in the time frame 116 family members from an unknown number of families who took part in the courses (sometimes grandparents and aunts also participated but the Consortium data is a head count rather than a 'family' count even though it is expressed as "participating families"). Their age, socio-economic status, language background, age of their child, and reasons for taking the course (in relation to their current status) has to be estimated retrospectively from the small number who came to interview.

We can then examine the influences on the family during the period of the training, the improvements in the key variables of attitude and interaction with the child during the course and then in the final debriefing and feedback sessions. This enables us to map

the parent progress from the starting point. We should then be able to verify this against the course report of the tutors. We are able at that point to generate a distance travelled estimate – how close the family is to the end point of bilingualism and their progress from the starting point. In this way we can confirm the effectiveness of the course model and also because different course participants are at different stages, we can validate the distance travelled model for this application. At least, that is the theory; most of this data has not been available to us. Consequently we have had to instead interpret self reporting by course tutors and non-present course organisers and to build the analysis around the small number of interviewed family members.

The target number of individuals from families receiving training has been exceeded (116 – the original target being 105) and the interviewed parents (approximately 10% of the whole) report positive soft outcomes (for example, being able to communicate better with their child, better understanding of communication strategies – neither of which of course, are indicators of measurable progress toward the goal except in terms of attitude and confidence. Table 5.1 below sets out the stages in distance travelled and the measures which are available to assess this.

Table 5.1 FSLC - Assessment of distance travelled for families

	Stages in distance travelled	**Measures**
1	Bilingual competence and easy interaction at home	Parental reports and/or observation
2	Less social isolation for the D/deaf child and their family	Indicator is parental report on home interactions
3	Fewer incidences of emotional or behavioural difficulties that often result from communication breakdown	Parent reports
4	Parents and wider family report they are better able to communicate with their D/deaf child	Family well-being reports
5	Greater communication proficiency	Tutor feedback and grades
6	Parents with greater understanding of different communication strategies with their D/deaf child and thus better informed about the educational choices they will need to make	Parent report
7	Greater numbers of parents taking BSL courses, subsequent to their completion of the FSLC	First stage is to seek help or instruction

We estimate that the majority of parents in joining the courses are at point 5 and that they have progressed to point 4 by the end of the course.

5.2.2 Distance travelled: Workstream 2 - ECSW and ladder of learning

This workstream was intended to deliver the I-Sign Objective 2 "to increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes". Consequently at the level of the individual we are concerned with members of the children's workforce achieving their ultimate goal of improving their BSL skills to higher levels.

Unfortunately it is impossible to show any progress along a trajectory of change for this: the I-Sign ECSW Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) is only just being piloted now. In addition there is no data to show how many of the children's workforce have taken I-Sign interpreter training with a view to using it in schools. Only one of the interpreters we spoke to (4 out of the 18 achieving registration) had been a member of the children's workforce and following qualification had quit working as an ECSW in a school to begin more lucrative work as a BSL – English interpreter in the Deaf community as a whole.

Table 5.2 ECSW - Assessment of distance travelled for the children's workforce

	Stages in distance travelled	Measures
1	Bilingual competence and easy interaction at school	Member of children's workforce: report reports and/or observation
2	Less linguistic isolation in school for the D/deaf child	Indicator is parental and member of children's workforce: reports
3	Fewer incidences of emotional or behavioural difficulties that often result from communication breakdown	Member of children's workforce: report
4	Children's workforce report they are better able to communicate with D/deaf children	Member of children's workforce: report
5	Greater communication proficiency	Tutor feedback and grades
6	Children's workforce equipped with greater understanding of different communication strategies with D/deaf children	Member of children's workforce: report
7	Greater numbers of children's workforce taking BSL courses beyond Levels 1 and 2	First stage is to seek help or instruction

The (hearing) children's workforce has not yet progressed to level 7 which is the first step on the pathway. I-Sign has not been able to open doors to this group. Moreover there is a regulatory disincentive which discourages progress for the children's workforce and potentially discourages upskilling of the children's workforce. There is, for example, no obligation on Teachers of the Deaf to hold anything more than BSL level 1 - a rudimentary qualification which does not enable any communication. Speech and Language therapists aim instead for Level 2 which is still below a level that allows effective communication. The new ECSW qualification was intended to require participants to have a minimum level 3 in BSL qualification, although the Signature specification allows participants to begin without this provided they will attain this after qualifying.

Furthermore, there is no strategy within I-Sign to address the training needs of Deaf assistants who are a valuable linguistic resource and also part of the children's work force. This group has been ignored by I-Sign but could been energised, with training, to deliver progress along the stages of distance travelled for this group.

5.2.3 Distance Travelled: Workstream 3- teacher training

In the time frame 18 BSL teachers completed PTTL qualifications, 6 teachers completed training to enable them to deliver Level 3 and NVQ Level 3 assessment, 2 teachers qualified to deliver level 4 language coaching and NVQ Level 4 BSL, 6 people qualified as A1 assessors, 2 as IVs, and 18 individuals achieved NRCPD registration. As with the FSLC cohort, their age, socio-economic status, language background, age of their child, and reasons for taking the course (in relation to their current status) has to be estimated retrospectively from the small number who came to interview.

The objective of this workstream was to increase the numbers of interpreters and BSL teachers to higher levels to deliver the overarching aim improve British Sign Language provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people. We therefore need to be able to map the progress of the trainees towards qualification and being able to operate at higher levels. While we can talk about an increase in overall numbers of BSL teachers, it is more difficult to assert that interpreters would not have qualified anyway without I-Sign. The data indicates however that they have in all likelihood qualified sooner as the result of the I-Sign intervention.

Table 5.3 training - assessment of distance travelled for interpreters and BSL teachers

	Stages in distance travelled - interpreters	Stages in distance travelled BSL teachers	Measures
1	Bilingual competence and easy interaction at work	Better teaching competence among BSL teachers	Individual and client/student reports and/or observation
2	Greater ease in finding an interpreter for Deaf people	More qualified BSL teachers	Indicator is user report on booking ease and numbers of BSL courses on offer
3	Deaf people report greater communication ease as the result of more interpreters	BSL teachers more confident in delivery	BSL teacher reports Client reports of waiting times
4	More qualified interpreters	Increased social interaction and peer support	Reports from the Deaf community and from BSL teachers
5	Better skills	Better learning as the result of BSL-medium instruction	BSL teacher reports, Interpreter reports
6	Greater communication proficiency	BSL teachers enrolling in I-Sign training programmes	Tutor feedback and interpreter report
7	Greater numbers of interpreters taking BSL and interpreting courses	Greater numbers of BSL teachers finding out about training	First stage is to seek help or instruction

We estimate that the majority of interpreters joining the courses are at point 5 and 4 and that BSL teachers are at point 4 and will have progressed to stage 3 by the end of the course.

 Although distance travelled is normally measured at the level of the individual, Figure 5.4 below shows distance travelled for the different work-streams as a whole, mapping the change achieved as the result of I-Sign through time and across the different worksteams. Both the MSDP and the ECSW qualification had a delayed start which meant that they have had less time to make progress towards their goals, although MSDP did exceed its target.

Figure 5.4: Showing   Distance travelled for the different I-Sign objectives, indicating starting point and ultimate outcomes at the end of the project.
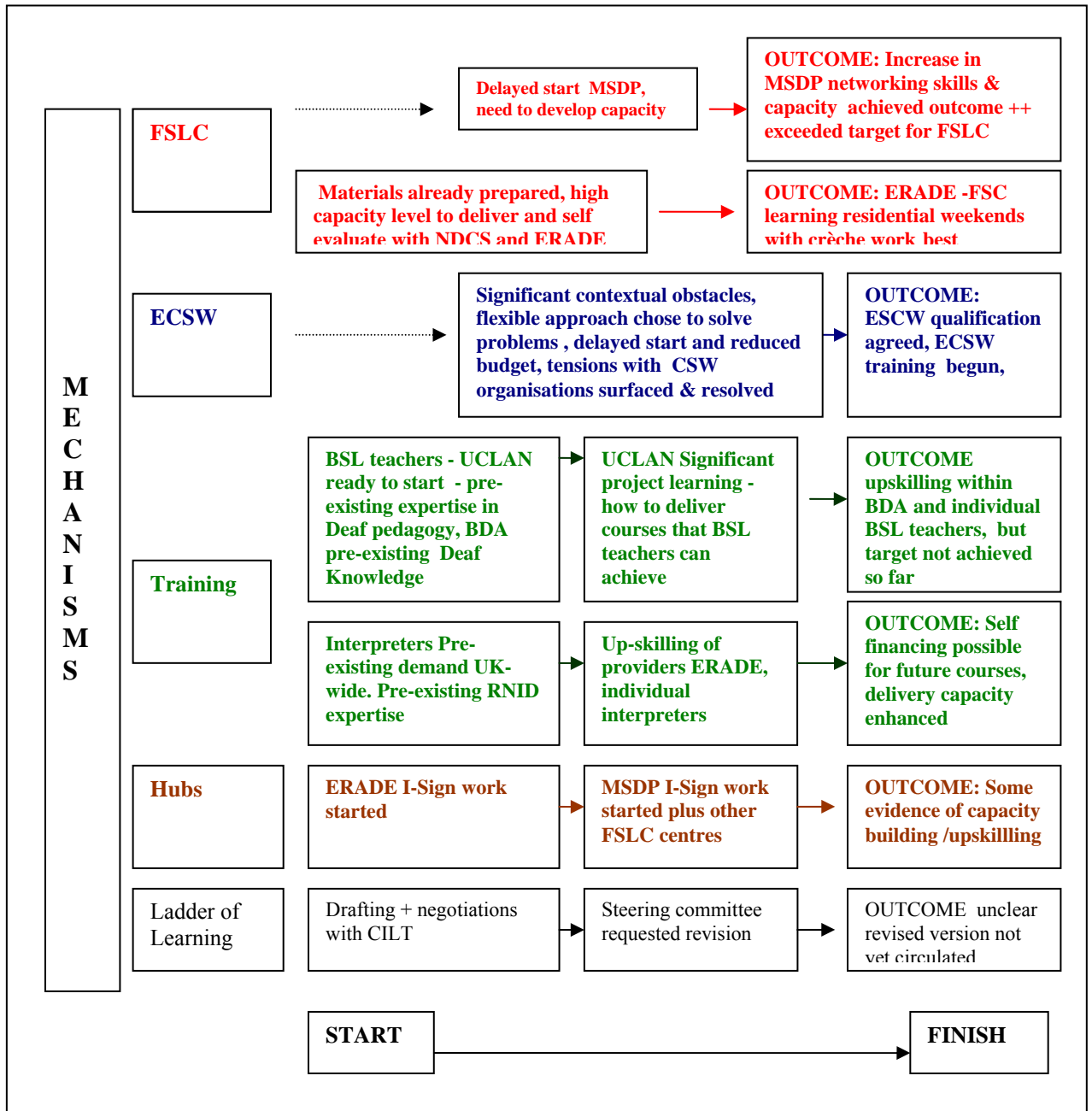
In the remaining sections we now assess progress towards meeting the I-Sign objectives.

[continued overleaf…]

5.3 Goal achievement - Objective 1

> Objective 1: increasing awareness of British Sign Language and choice for families with deaf and hearing impaired children to learn and communicate using BSL.

Objective 1 of the I-Sign pilot was delivered through the Family Sign Language Curriculum in a number of locations – Exeter, Liverpool, as well as Fylde and Blackpool Deaf Children's Society. As we saw in Sections 3 and 4 parents were generally very satisfied with the FSLC training which provided much valued peer support and age-appropriate language and increased their confidence and willingness to use BSL with their child.

In terms of meeting the objective to 'increase awareness of BSL and choice for families with D/deaf children to learn and communicate using BSL', for the participating families this element of I-Sign has been a success. In February 2011, 116 families had received FSLC training. In the absence of census data on the total size of the Deaf population it is impossible to find a figure for the total number of D/deaf children under 5. Soft outcomes range from attitudinal, personal, and practical skills but in addition there were discernable social and peer support benefits which helped to increase motivation.

However, for the participating families the demand is clear and the experience entirely positive. Without exception parents we spoke to attributed their achievement of these soft outcomes to the FSLC training provided by the pilot. As I-Sign is a pilot, achieving this objective nationally would require its roll-out across the UK and its continuation for the foreseeable future. In addition, there is some evidence of a demand to extend the training package to include older children and their siblings as well as making it available to families outside the SW and NW.

5.4 Goal Achievement - Objective 2

Objective 2: increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills including to higher levels to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes [3]

Achieving this objective has been extremely difficult for the Consortium due to the different requirements placed on qualifications by the TDA (schools and compulsory education) and LLUK (post 16 – further education). Achieving distance travelled would have indicated an early accreditation of the Signature Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) for pre and post 16, and the successful completion of students graduating on the course and working as ECSWs using the techniques learned. However, a decision was made by the Consortium to focus its energies on post-16 ECSWs in part due to a very strongly articulated demand for this in this sector. While schools are able to draw down additional funding through statements this option is not available for the post-16 sector and a real need for ECSWs was felt; in part due to the funding regime for post-16 learners linked to DSA. As a result, a delay took place before a decision was made to focus only on post-16 ECSWs. However, at this point the change of government linked to cuts in agencies resulted in the freezing of the LLUK for a period.

However, the post-16 pilot is now established in Coventry to deliver the Signature Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) and this has received accreditation from Ofqual. Although the Steering Group status report notes that this involves "capturing of minimum level 3 in BSL skills for support workers where learners utilise BSL" (Steering Group status report as at December 2010), The Signature web site is showing a minimum level 2 , and strongly encouraging candidates to achieve Level 3 during or shortly after completing the course. The Consortium's December output statement notes that:

> "The qualification specification and regulations for the Level 3
> Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) are
> complete and on the Signature website". (Steering Group status report
> as at December 2010)

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[3] Be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well being

Although it is not possible to demonstrate any increase in demand to improve BSL skills in the children's workforce, the ECSW qualification is now being piloted in Coventry. There was insufficient take up to run a second course in Exeter. Partners also report improved relations with NATED and ACSW after their initial resistance to the title of the new qualification.

The goals expressed to us for the Ladder of Learning (demonstrating that BSL is a language like any other by hosting the ladder on CILT) do not really contribute greatly to the achievements of the aim of the pilot as a whole. The changing legal and policy context for BSL as the result of the UK ratification of the UN Convention of the Rights of Disabled People (UN 2008) we can now expect a more general acceptance that BSL is a language and there are arguably other more pressing battles to be won (including for example the requirement that Teachers of the Deaf achieve minimum BSL standards above Level 1) to achieve the aims of the pilot.

Given the difficulties with the achievement of the ECSW qualification for pre and post 16, at best this objective has been partially achieved. We can see however that our assessment of distance travelled for the children's workforce above the objective has not been met at all and there is considerable progress yet to be made. It is however positive that the Signature Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) is now established so there is now a trajectory of change in place.

5.5 Goal Achievement - Objective 3

Objective 3: increase the availability of BSL tutors courses and interpreters including to higher levels

This objective has two different stakeholder groups – Interpreters and BSL teachers. The Consortium has worked hard to increase the offer of training in BSL to these two groups with higher level qualifications being offer to achieve MSRLI status for interpreters and qualified teacher status for BSL teachers. Interpreters have been trained to Level 3, Level4/6. 18 BSL teachers have achieved PTTL and a group is currently preparing for the CTTL qualifications. A smaller number of interpreters and BSL teachers (12) have taken the VI and A1 assessor qualifications (figure from Feb 2011). Interpreters have

also been offered Level 3 teaching and level 4 in BSL with 18 achieving NRCPD registration. In addition BSL teachers have also been able to access CPD.

The distance travelled trajectory of change for the objective is fairly easy to map – an increase in BSL teachers and interpreters qualified to higher levels. However in the absence of any baseline data on numbers of BSL teachers and their qualification levels, it is difficult to demonstrate in absolute terms how much progress has been made. Individuals show their own distance travelled as discussed above and in *Section 3*. BSL teachers report greater learning confidence and more are able to teach to a higher level and to act as assessors. At UCLAN there was some attrition by participants in Cohort 1 but this has lessened in the second cohort due to better provision of teaching placements at the outset. BSL teachers have taken BSLTTC, PTTL and CTTL training at UCLAN and commented favourably on the linguistics training. For the interpreters, 18 out of a total of approximately 700 interpreters in the country represents a small increase. They claim to be happy with course and completing it (although one of the courses (A1) had a high attrition rate), and with their self assessment of the importance of more affordable courses in convenient geographical places to their successful completion of them.

Although this objective specifies an increase in the availability of BSL tutors and courses both interpreters and BSL teachers have stressed the importance of quality. This objective has been achieved and a pathway of change should continue beyond the life of I-Sign.

5.6 Goal Achievement - Objective 4

Objective 4: demonstrate how existing centres of excellence in BSL such as deaf special schools specialist units in mainstream schools or BSL course providers
can play a key role in achieving the project's aims

The Consortium has invested heavily in developing capacity in the SW and NW. In the case of ERADE capacity to deliver BSL training has been increased to include:

- FSLC
- FSLC tutor training
- Level 3
- Level 6
- Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker)

In addition to the Level 1 and 2 training already being offered, all partners speak highly of the positive working relationship developed between ERADE and other members of the Consortium. ERADE itself has commented that it now feels able to push ahead with development without the same level of support from NDCS or the Consortium. Consortium data however indicates a below target achievement of FSLC training (58 from 75 families). Although ERADE already had significant expertise in delivering Deaf Sector training its overall portfolio has been enhanced and it is now perceived as a centre for excellence in this field.

MDPS has mainly delivered FSLC and FSLC tutor training as the region already had existing provision for higher level BSL courses (e.g. Level 3 in BSL).

> "Great care was taken to ensure that training opportunity was additional and not duplicated (i.e. that we actively avoided a flow of learners from existing provision to project provision). This is very easily demonstrated in the North West where no stand alone BSL courses were delivered given evidence of sufficient capacity locally".

The experience with MDSP with the programme was more difficult than ERADE's. A one year delay in inception for FSLC training precluded as long a learning trajectory to develop the hub to the same extent. Notwithstanding this, MSDP has considerably exceeded the target for families receiving (target 30 families – 51 families trained). However, to develop as a successful centre of excellence we can expect ultimately to see successful marketing, attracting students, and self perception of enhanced capacity.

5.7 Goal Achievement - Objective 5

Objective 5: demonstrate how progress can be sustainable beyond the project's life within the current and planned early years, schools and post-16 funding arrangements and disability legislation requirements on service providers

At the time of writing the Consortium have held a meeting (02 March 2011) to vision a way forward and elaborate and agree plans for post pilot sustainability. We understand that the Consortium will be producing a report on this. We are aware that there are a few ideas for a new vision for a sustainable post pilot project and we hope this may yield a viable business plan.

5.8 Summary

In designing the specification for I-Sign the (then) DCSF (now DfE) laid now some highly ambitious aims and objectives. If achievement of these objectives were to be quantified against an estimated overall figure of the total Deaf population and numbers of D/deaf children it may be difficult to show significant change on purely numerical terms as the numbers of agreed outputs have been relatively small for each objective and workstream. However I-Sign is much more than just a numbers game. Firstly, as a pilot, it would be nonsensical (and even unethical) to effectuate a treatment on a significant proportion of the target group: it makes sense to trial different approaches to gather evidence and learning about what works, why and where within the constraints of the budget available. Secondly, the I-Sign pilot has overtly sought to achieve real quality enhancements rather than just focusing on achieving high numbers of participants.

The pilot has augmented capacity (to differing levels) in the hubs of Exeter and MDPS as well as beyond with the Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) being piloted in Coventry and FSLC being offered in Fylde and Blackpool Deaf Children's Society. In addition, we are aware that there are some instances of I-Sign trained interpreters setting up training courses of their own. "An organisation in West Cheshire, a participant of I-Sign whose staff member will attain the A1 award, is adding BSL Level 3 to its publicly available courses and will be delivering, independently, a programme starting early 2011" (Steering Group status report as at December 2010). In addition, a BSL teacher from Cornwall who achieved BSL NVQ4 and the A1 award through I-Sign has established a Level 3 course in Cornwall. These are individual examples of roll out but it is difficult to be sure at this stage whether there will be a cascade effect.

In summary the I-Sign project has been fairly successful in achieving the stated aims for objectives 1, 3 and 4, although objective 2 has not been successfully implemented due to unexpected external policy considerations following change of government, and unanticipated regulatory complexities surrounding accreditation of qualifications for different age groups. Objective 5 similarly will be realised progressively beyond the I-Sign funding period. The Consortium's Operational Team and Strategic Board have met to initiate this visioning process but realistically must be allowed time to take on board the findings of this evaluation before moving to a business plan or a series of business

plans. One of the key difficulties faced by I-Sign has been the failure to read across objectives and have a joined up approach to goal achievement. As the sSteering cCommittee has pointed out this has meant on occasion the achievement of Objective 3 (specifically training interpreters) potentially at a detrimental cost to the achievement of Objective 2 (upskilling the children's workforce).

In terms of meeting the overarching aim of the project;

> "to improve British Sign Language provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people"

The I-Sign pilot has shown a working model for FSLC training and a real need for this service, additional interpreters and BSL tutors contribute to the overall BSL provision. The new Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) sets out a minimum Level 3 BSL standard and this is likely to make a real difference to the educational attainment of D/deaf young people in the post-16 context. The Ladder of Learning that we have seen requires more work and we are not yet aware in what format it will be hosted on CILT.

If the overarching aim of I-Sign is to improve BSL provision and status for families of D/deaf and hearing impaired children and young people, by definition achieving this goal can only be on a fairly limited scale from a pilot project. The same applies to the five objectives: it is slightly unfortunate that no reference is made either in the original DCSF invitation to tender nor in the I-Sign proposal to the scale of expected achievement. The only indication comes the agreement of target output figures early on with DfE, and from the formulation of the two regional hubs. However it is not possible to achieve each objective completely in a pilot project of this size.

6. OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONSORTIUM

6.1 Introduction

In this section we assess the operational effectiveness of the Consortium using evaluation criteria of effectiveness and efficiency – i.e. to what extent there is a coherent, integrated project structure with facility to articulate and share its goals. This section presents the views of the Consortium on the development and implementation of activities including variation in impact and effectiveness between the areas as required by the specification for Signing First's evaluation.

 The Consortium operates with a core team comprising a strategic board and an operational team which meets periodically to make strategic decisions. The development of partnership working has also been a learning experience and a challenge and the sharing of information between partners has been rendered more complex by the need to negotiate two languages (BSL and English) and two cultures (Deaf and hearing) with their different associated norms and practices. However, I-Sign was designed as a pilot to find out what works well and what does not, and in terms of operation there is evidence of an improved partnership capacity emerging throughout the pilot's operation.

We have undertaken a series of interviews with directors and key personnel involved in the delivery of the I-Sign Pilot throughout the time period that the evaluation has been running. As part of this we have supplied formative feedback at the interim reporting stage and on a one-to onebasis during early meetings with the I-Sign co-ordinator based at the RNID. During the two years of its operation the pilot has been faced with a number of logistical difficulties and the need to establish and clarify the division of roles and functions within the Consortium, which were at times not transparent to all partners. All of the partners have all stated that although it has been a steep learning curve, the development of a partnership has brought a considerable benefit in learning to work together especially considering the relative paucity of joined-up working across the sector predating the pilot. Testimony to this is the continued wish to work together once the pilot ceases on 31st March 2011. In addition, the pilot aimed to engineer additional capacity in the hubs at Exeter and Liverpool and

this has been achieved to varying degrees of success considering the very different starting points for the two organisations ERADE and MDPS.

We have had difficulty discerning the structures and the management of work-plans, milestones, deliverables. This has made it difficult to identify a coherent theory of change or to operationalise the soft outcomes. These issues make it hard for the Consortium to manage its own progress other than as a set of disparate and unrelated projects.

6.2 Partnership development and knowledge sharing at the strategic level

Almost all the partners have described their participation in the I-Sign Consortium as a steep learning curve but as also being a positive experience. Some of the partners from the north state that they have forged better working relationships with other northern partners as the direct result of attending meetings in London, demonstrating a benefit to the sector as the result of I-Sign which extends beyond the stated aims of the pilot itself. Difficulties lay in the inconvenience of travelling large distances to attend meetings, especially for the northern partners, and also a feeling by some that the hearing partners dominated at strategic level making a full understanding of the issues faced by Deaf learners more difficult for them to appreciate.

> "it is noticeable within the Consortium that there is a lack of Deaf voice as not all managers or someone from more senior level are in touch with their operational staff and that in itself can be hard work."

While we can appreciate the difficulties of holding meetings with Deaf and hearing people, given that the whole aim is about raising the profile of BSL and that it is the language of Deaf people, it would have been good to see more Deaf people being proactive in this respect and that this could possibly paved the way for this to happen in the future. There is a considerable need to engineer an increase in capacity for Deaf organisations and it was a missed opportunity to do this.

In addition, some strategic-level decisions have been questioned by operational team members who had hoped for greater involvement with the activities of other work-streams than was achieved. It was mentioned that, in the beginning, that the advantage of having the Consortium is that partners would be working more closely in supporting

each other. However in practice due to time restraints this did not happen as, for example, both BDA and ULCAN were not asked to help provide and select BSL teachers for FSC training. Likewise UCLAN was not involved in providing opportunities for the interpreting students' placements. Furthermore, the BDA's budget was reduced as funds were vired to cover the setting up of a crèche facility for the FSC weekends.

> "Part of the original bid was to appoint a part time development worker
> as this person would be responsible for setting up the Deaf tutor hub.
> This did not materialise as this was not seen as a priority as extra
> money had to go for other things decided by the Consortium."

Given the pressing need to enable BSL teachers to develop career progression and more focused training to enable them to support D/deaf children, this would appear to have been a missed opportunity. Feedback from BSL teachers and from other partners indicates a real requirement. The need for this element was perhaps under-appreciated and would suggest that there is a real need to engage Deaf people equally at strategic level to access and utilise their key tacit knowledge about the sector and the community.

There is some evidence from the interviews that the Consortium suffered from over-dependence on key individuals as repositories of knowledge of the project as a whole. Future initiatives would benefit from a more integrated knowledge management system. For example the start of the project in the NW was delayed by the absence on maternity leave of a member of staff in a partner organisation. Achieving optimal operational capacity in the future would entail the need to have troubleshooting systems and a knowledge management system to enable the Consortium to cope better even if individuals are absent for a period of time.

One of the partners has observed that different models were needed for the NW and SW and it took some time to realise this. This suggests that ideally the project needed a longer time to embed and reach its optimal operational capacity. This means that greater distance has been travelled in moving towards joined-up working as it is easy but not terribly beneficial to work only with partners you already know well. It is undoubtedly the case that the kinds of relationships that have been formed vary in their strength and regularity of contact. For some organisations lasting working relationships have been established, for others there is a greater understanding of what the partners do:

"The SW worked well with Exeter as a central point. We have had events there in the past, but our links have been strengthened. In terms of other partners, like [Signature], we will meet at certain points and deviate but come together again at other times. Relationships have been established."

However, numerous positive remarks have been made by *all* the partners about the benefits of Consortium joined-up working - some of these are included here:

- "It's a big learning curve. The Consortium is a great benefit of the project – we are a functioning group working together. In terms of the bid as a whole, the strategic element, and our work stream, yes it is a largely strategic project – but you can't work on one stream on it's own – you have to look at infrastructure – one element on its own won't work. So that is a strength of the Consortium."

- "It was good to get all different organisations together as for example some of us do not have a good history of relationships … so this has provided us with opportunity to start building relationships".

6.3 Communication and understanding of roles at the operational level

We were not able to detect evidence of strong relationships between the strategic and operational levels within the Consortium. At the operational level we could not detect opportunities for sharing of expertise and knowledge across workstreams. As a new Consortium, it has been their first time in working together in which there had been some differences where they had to learn to work with each other and to respect the differences as to how they try overcome these. It is understandable that time and trust would be need to be in place in order for all the members of the Consortium to fully understand what would be expected from them at the operational level. However, the I-Sign pilot, in its drive to test out different projects and ways of working, became extremely complex, making a full understanding of I-Sign elusive to some of members of the Consortium:

"As for the I-Sign Consortium, I think we spent a lot of time of not being sure what we should be doing as there were so many different things happening within the Consortium."

By way of example, knowledge of the Ladder of Learning among key directors of the Consortium was very limited. Staff at UCLAN and NDCS, for example, professed very limited or complete lack of knowledge of its role in I-Sign. One Consortium member said of this:

"Oh gosh, I've not seen the BSL Ladder of Learning since we initially talked about it in the bidding process…. this is what I meant about not

finding out what is happening with other streams of the project, I only know about my work-stream."

This sentiment has been echoed by many of the operational staff delivering I-Sign in the different work-streams.

- "I fully supported the Consortium philosophy and their goals and the aims were fine but in practice there have been very little collaboration between ourselves."

- "if I was to repeat the project again. I would have liked more networking between the operational staff from the different Consortium partners. I am aware that at strategic level, partners have regular opportunities to meet up and share, but operational level I believe we only met once at the beginning of the project which is a great shame. I think the operational staff feel we put stuff into the project but we're not clear what's happening with other partners and how they're getting on."

Consequently, while at the strategic level there is much positive to be said about the benefits of partnership working across the Consortium this does not map so well at operational level. An enormous step forward has been taken in developing Consortium-working which was previously absent in the sector. However, should the project be extended, this would need to be developed further to ensure more unified and coherent joined-up working at all levels of the Consortium. This would help ensure that all the different strands were better aware of what others were doing, and would ensure that better sharing of expertise across the partnership (for example enabling the NDCS to be aware of the expertise at UCLAN and BDA in identifying BSL teachers for FSLC training).

6.4 Distance Travelled: Consortium Achievements

Research on multi-organisational partnership working shows that the emergence of a fully functional operational partnership takes time[4] (Macintosh 1993, Lowndes & Skelcher 1998) As with the formation of any team, relationships need to be formed, stormed and normed and performed (Tuckman 1965). This is more complex when seven organisations come together to work in a Consortium with no previous history of joint working, the need to dialogue across Deaf and hearing cultures and in two

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[4] Macintosh (1993) identified 3 phases: transformation, synergy and budget enlargement as a process of learning to work together, generating added value and being able to generate additional resources

languages, with multiple aims and objectives to deliver. The additional complexity of a national project with the logistical difficulties of arranging times and venues to meet have not been inconsiderable. Consequently, the successful delivery of outputs and completion of the project is a significant step forward; a first in the Deaf sector which should be encouraged and applauded. Ideally the project needed to run for a longer time period to enable the Consortium to progress through all the stages to achieve effective fully functional working at both strategic and operational levels. The Consortium has delivered outputs, and tackled problems and challenges which have arisen during the project lifecourse (political, weather related, recession/down-turn induced).

Directors and operational team members have numerous positive things to say about the performance of the I-Sign pilot. Many of these are related to achievements of goals and positive benefits of I-Sign on the target groups and this is discussed in more detail below. Consortium partners have made the following observations:

- " I know we have achieved much more as a Consortium than we could have as individual organisations, so it has been brilliant for us all to work together for the benefit of deaf children, their families, professionals."

- "The I-Sign Project has been an extremely valuable initiative, bringing organisations together who support families and professionals working with Deaf people. Expertise has been shared and infra-structures for sustainable development of sign language initiatives have been set up. The fact that we have been flexible in trialling different delivery systems means that we have been able to learn more about what works well."

6.5 Summary

The I-Sign delivery structure is quite complex as the result of its Consortium format. With 7 key partners, the mere logistics of bringing individuals together for board meetings and meetings of the operational team are not inconsiderable. In the light of these logistical difficulties the Consortium has done well to deliver on key outputs but would have needed a longer operational period to enter into a fully functioning mature partnership arrangement. Partnership working has been more effective at strategic rather than operational level, and the lack of opportunities for exchange of ideas has resulted in lost opportunities to level some additional added-value maximising sharing of expertise held by the different partner groups.

We observed at the interim report stage that the I-Sign project was operating more as a series of discrete sub-projects and invited the Consortium to consider more coherent branding and cohesive partnership working. We recognise that this has been difficult to achieve for the reasons given above, but that considerable distance has been travelled in nurturing the Consortium ethos and working together at the strategic level.

"There's one thing I would have done differently. As a group, we're focused on delivering the objectives. And I wouldn't change that but add to it. Having someone or an organisation or individual whose responsibility is to champion the project as a whole. Some of us have done something like this, but there's something around owning the whole, or having a Chief Executive outlook – to say, this is brilliant, to get out there and talk about it, not in terms of particular work streams but to champion it as a whole."

The I –Sign project has instigated partnership-learning and a degree of much needed capacity enhancement as, prior to I-Sign, the sector was characterised by little joined-up working. The absence of workplans, milestones and deliverables has been a problem in assessing the effectiveness of the Consortium. In accordance with the specification we have presented here the views of the Consortia on development and implementation of the activities and variations in impact and effectiveness between the areas that the partners discerned. We would hope that moving forward the Consortium now has a greater awareness of how to work as a multi-organisational Consortium to lever benefits and advantages for the Deaf adults and D/deaf children and their families who they are supporting.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

"I think to carry on without further funding would be much more difficult, there is also extra risk as BSL should be protected as for those who want to learn BSL and for those who want to teach BSL. I think it is important that we continue to safeguard the progress being made so really they should continue to carry on with this kind of commitment."

In accordance with the brief for the Signing First evaluation we consider how the projects can be sustained beyond the life of the project funding. Ensuring sustainability is also encapsulated in I-Sign's Objective 5 "to demonstrate how progress can be sustainable beyond the project's life within current and planned early years, schools and post-16 funding arrangements and disability legislation on service providers". A the end of its period of operation the I-Sign Consortium has carried out a visioning day on sustainability and plans for activities from April 2011, once DfE funding has ceased. A report is currently being drawn up by the I-Sign Consortium.

Throughout its operation Consortium members have been reflecting on sustainability across 4 main parameters:

- Whether they should be charging for training;
- Additional sources of external funding;
- And potential for roll out to other regions;
- The need for a marketing expertise.

7.1 Charging for training

The key issue surrounding sustainability rests on the vexed issue of charging for training courses. Currently the following charging format applies:

UCLAN	free
UCLAN/CPD	free
FSLC	free
RNID	training – a charge is levied

Although cost is a factor in determining the demand for training, it is also the case that a number of the partners have posited whether some degree of charging may motivate students to attend. The idea of a refundable deposit has also been discussed.

> "families were not always committed to coming regularly but on the other hand if they had to pay something, they may value this more."

Charging may enable some of the costs to be passed on to the participants but this is unlikely to be a solution for all worksteams and in our assessment some fom of subsidy will still be required especially for workstream 1, and additional support for BSL teachers (workstream 3).

7.2 Roll out to other regions

A second issue for sustainability is that of roll-out. Several of the RNID training initiatives are designed with the objective of seeding additional provision in the regions. To this end a Level 3 in BSL course was set up in Cornwall by a BSL teacher who had been through advanced NVQ Level 4 and A1 training with I-Sign, and other AI and VI graduates are expected to also deliver interpreting training in the SW. This has already happened in the NW, with an organisation in West Cheshire adding Level 3 to its available training courses, following a staff member undertaking the A1 award with I-Sign. Further, as the result of teachers undertaking AI and VI training through I-Sign, a course is now due to begin in the NW to deliver Level 6 in BSL/English interpreting. These examples will be financed by the students paying to attend courses. However, it is difficult to perceive these current examples as constituting a trend. In completing its visioning discussion the Consortium will need to have a plan for roll out of the programmes across the UK.

In our assessment   there is a real need for some marketing expertise to increase demand among the children's work force and demonstrate the career pathways for potential interpreting students and BSL teachers. This is a prerequisite to achieving a sustainable self-financing training workstream

The hubs as centres of excellence in delivering the project's aims have been an integral part of a theory of change for delivering sustainability. Throughout this report we have

observed how the regional hubs were part of a broader exercise of leveraging capacity and equipping regions with the expertise and skills-base to roll out self-financing BSL courses to interpreters and BSL teachers. The Consortium is now looking for its investment to initiate a cascade or domino effect driven by its own momentum.

Two members of I-Sign Consortium have noted that that there is a greater demand for professional development for both BSL teachers and interpreters than it would be possible to accommodate within the project. This is something they would need to take into consideration if they were to roll-out this further in other areas. If monies could be found then a survey would help identify areas where there is acute shortage of BSL teachers of different levels and interpreters and possibly both.

Recommendations for roll out:

- More networking and sharing resources to ensure the programmes can be continued, i.e. putting in joint partnership bid

- Training staff is one way of ensuring the substainability, however a structure and database is needed and keeping those updated is important

- There is a potential spin-off from original pilot to next phrase. i.e. training for FSLC tutors so that they can become accredited with BSL teachers

While self financing is the aim there is an argument to be made that some form of public sector subsidy will still be needed initially.

Regional areas interested in replicating this may wish to receive advice on how this worked for the ERADE and MSDP. Potentially, consultancy fees could be sought for this that would bring in extra revenue.

7.3 Source of additional finances

ERADE were successful in gaining an LSC grant which enabled them to lower the cost of training for FSLC in Exeter. Despite this success, the problem for all partners remains

"where can we find extra resource to make sure that I-Sign can be continued." One potential avenue that is being explored is Northern Ireland for FSLC

> "But we will look for funds to expand, e.g. in Northern Ireland – that is already under discussion. And that would mean adding to the site, making changes, and developing it, if we get funding. And to continue to promote it to families across the UK – that is a core element to our organisation."

Both the interpreter training through RNID and the BSL teacher training (RNID, UCLAN and BDA) will be financed through students' fees, drawing on an infrastructure put in place during I-Sign. This is the budget model that learners of BSL and interpreting are used to: paying course fees as standard. However, the NDCS is adamant that their FSLC courses need to be free. Consequently, without I-Sign DfE support they will need additional external finance:

> "We know the format works but we can't do it for nothing, we need funding to run those courses."

NDCS have stated that the Family Sign Manager will continue to be funded to work in the role and that her responsibility would be to oversee the website. They would continue to source funds that would enable this to be rolled-out to other areas. Northern Ireland will be the next to benefit from this support.

7.4 Marketing

The I-Sign pilot did not build in any provision for marketing expertise but this is an essential component of the sustainable forward-looking vision. It is important is to consider how the future of BSL teachers could be safeguarded. In some situations it may be possible to consider market training as a viable option that would bring in extra resources. Colleges employing BSL teachers may consider sending their staff on training, especially if BSL is second most popular adult course.

8. GOOD PRACTICE AND LEARNING POINTS

In line with the specification for this evaluation we here identify which aspects of the pilot project have worked well and the lessons learnt.

8.1 Indicators of Good Practice

Good practice for participants:

- There is no doubt that the activities are highly valued by participants and on the whole very positive responses have been received from parents and families, BSL teachers and FSLC tutors, and interpreters,demonstrating the value placed on the work of I-Sign;
- The FSLC courses have had exceptionally good feedback from participants due to their relevance to family needs for their children;
- I-Sign has helped participants gain new skills, a support network and, for families, enabled learning additional communication tactics;
- Through the UCLAN I-Sign course some BSL tutors are now on track to gain CTTL awards to meet the requirements of the Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007;
- CPD (delivered through UCLAN and the BDA) has increased confidence and peer support among BSL teachers;
- The 'how to teach Level 3' course has also raised BSL teachers standards and skills portfolio;
- Participants gaining A1 and VI awards now have the capacity to help roll-out training programmes for interpreters;
- Localised provision has made it easier for interpreters to up-skill without extensive long distance travel. This has caused interpreters to qualify sooner than would otherwise have been the case.

Good practice: the I-Sign pilot's potential to enhance/ lever capacity in BSL provision:
- In terms of provision of BSL, the pilot's activities score highly compared to the relatively static picture seen elsewhere across the UK. The pilot

has been instrumental in increasing provision where appropriate in the SW and NW;

- I-Sign is credited by the SW directors with radically transforming BSL provision in the SW. It has increased and extended the portfolio of BSL training they can offer. MSDP have significantly exceeded their target for FSLC training an additional 51 rather than 30 families. FSLC therefore has the potential to significantly enhance capacity at a regional level;
- 6 BSL teachers offering Levels 1 and 2 in the SW are now able to offer Level 3 – this is a regional enhancement to capacity.

Evidence that the Consortium has on-going reflective learning and is delivering on its targets:

- The Consortium has demonstrated flexibility and learning in its response to the difficulties of the ECSW workstream.

8.2 Learning points

At the policy level there are three emerging learning points:

1. The pilot would benefit from a clearer policy statement, procedure or common approach to training the children's workforce;
2. There remains a need for further *policy support* to assist BSL teachers in establishing a career progression route, professional groups and BSL-medium training opportunities.

The question of post I-Sign funding is linked to the need for a more coherent vision and theory of change which we believe is now incorporated into their forthcoming visioning statement. Linked to this,

1. The Consortium would benefit from a marketing expert to promote its activities beyond the life-course of the pilot helping to deliver sustainability;
2. There has always been difficulty in matching some of the activities (training and courses for interpreters and BSL tutors) with the stated I-Sign aims of improving provision of families of Deaf and hearing impaired children and young people.

To this end the Consortium would have benefited from clear deliverables, milestones, work-plans for each workstream;

The question of the visibility of the I-Sign project to its own participants (and beyond that across the Deaf sector) has come up repeatedly in the preceding discussions. There learning points and suggested actions arising from this are as follows:

1. *Visibility to participants and non I-Sign regions:* understanding that the training offered is part of I-Sign by participants needed attention. This would have increased their understanding of the purpose and opportunities offered by the pilot, its potential for roll-out and how they may be able to contribute to this as individuals;

2. *visibility of DfE funding:* this was improved during the lifetime of the pilot to ensure that the status it gave BSL learning was enhanced;

3. *Visibility of I–Sign within the Deaf community:* some targeted intervention to raise awareness among BSL teachers and other members of the Deaf community is still required. As a minimum, information about training opportunities might be carried in BSL on the I-Sign project website;

4. *Publicity for participants:* word of mouth appears to be the principal way in which all courses recruit their participants – more equitable ways of offering the provision still need to be considered.

In addition there are some learning points which we broadly refer to as organisational issues:

1. There is a need for greater sharing of the process in creating and developing activities across the Consortium, greater cross-partner working especially at the operational level;

2. Self monitoring and reporting by the Consortium would be enhanced by clearer reporting of progress against the contracted deliverables, milestones , work-plans and measurable outcomes. The NDCS offers a working model of some of these elements which could be utilised by other workstreams.

Finally, learning points surrounding the substantive question of the pilot's content and day to day operation:

- *Ladder of Learning:* still needs revision to become a user-friendly resource. Visual mapping would make it more easily accessible and conform to a culturally Deaf presentation ethos. Colour coding or a diagram of training pathways needs to be included and references to individual providers removed

.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The aims of the Signing First evaluation were as follows:

1. To explore the extent to which the project has created more and better streamlined BSL qualifications and consider the implications of this for BSL provision and delivery, both to date and in the future (*Sections 2 and 7*)

2. to explore the perceived benefits of the project activities and outputs across all stakeholder groups, including D/deaf children and young people and their families (*Section 3*)

3. to assess the extent to which the investment represented value for money *(Section 4)*

4. to explore the extent to which the projects have influenced and impacted on BSL provision, delivery and take up in the pilot areas, but also whether the project has influenced activity and outcomes nationally (*Sections 2, 3, 4, 5*)

5. to include views of the Consortium on the development and implementation of activities including variation in impact and effectiveness between the areas. (*Section 6*)

6. to consider the proposals from the I-Sign consortium as to how the work can be sustained beyond the period of the project funding *(Section 7)*

7. identify aspects of the pilot project have worked well and the lessons learned (*Section 8*)

We have analysed a large body of data including documentary resources, interviews and a focus group and questionnaires sent out to participants at the interim and final stages of data collection. We have found that:

- FSLC has been a relative success and has made considerable strides towards achieving I-Sign Objective 1. It also is judged very positively by participants;

- The upskilling of the children's workforce (objective 2) has not happened under I-Sign although an ECSW qualification is now being piloted;

- The training of BSL teachers and interpreters has seen 122 people pass through training. The BSL teachers were grateful for the opportunity for peer support and BSL medium training while the

interpreters were glad for more localized provision although there skills did not differ markedly for those of non I-Sign trainee interpreters;

- Hubs were set up under Objective 4 and have delivered with varying degrees of success;

- Objective 5 sustainability is still being worked on by the Consortium post the Pilot's operational period having been concluded.

In addition,

- Some of the objectives have been conflicting – training interpreters and upskilling the children's workforce sit rather uneasily together and there is a suspicion that some ECSWs may leave working in schools once they qualify as BSL – English interpreters;

- The Consortium has evidenced impressive learning about working in partnership at the strategic level. There is room, however, to equip more Deaf members with the capacity and skills they need by integrating them better and not excluding them at strategic level.

During the operation of I-Sign the policy context has altered significantly. Originally grounded in the Labour government's vision of "Every Child Matters" (DFES 2003), SEN, and the Children and Young People's workforce strategy (DCSF 2008a), the change in government towards the end of the pilot has been accompanied by a shift in policy priorities towards more free market arrangements encapsulated in the SEN Green Paper (DfE 2011), published this month. It recognises that the current system of support for children with special needs children is often unfair, bureaucratic, bewildering, adversarial and that it does not always reflect the needs of their child and their families. With an early screening programme in place, families were made aware that their child would have special needs either prior or soon after the birth. Therefore, having a good intervention programme is needed early for the families. However, across the different local authorities, there is a huge disparity among the different support agencies and that to get the support they need can be slow and complicated.

The Green paper recommends that, by 2014, any child or young person with a statement would only need to have a single assessment in which an Education, Health and Care plan can be drawn up to support the child from birth up to the age of 25. This would give the parents greater control with their own personalised funding which can be

used to obtain the different support. Currently, for example, specialist speech and language therapy is available under the health authority rather than the education authority. Each family with a special needs child would be allocated an identified key worker that would help them to navigate through the system in obtaining the support. This would mean that the families would be able to purchase the support from the specialist Teachers of the Deaf, audiologists, speech and language therapists, Social Worker for the Deaf and other professionals for their child. In addition, the parents would be able to have a choice to consider which schooling, (including Academies and Free Schools) that would be suitable for their child. However, some lobby campaigners, such as NDCS are keen that the Government will look into providing a wide range and diversity of provision for D/deaf children and their families.

Two previous government policies, *"Together from the Start"* and *"Developing Early Intervention/Support for deaf children and their families"* (DfES and RNID, 2002) have maintained the importance of the role of the specialist support services. However with the recent Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching: Schools"(2010), the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) voiced their concerns that Local Authorities would not be responsible for providing specialist support services but would be using external commissioning instead (BATOD 2010). There is also a concern that while parents would be able to choose excellent schools, no mention is made about children with special needs. They have asked how this would work with special schools and units in mainstream schools and how would funding be delivered for out-of-county placements in non-maintained schools? These matters have yet to be resolved. Thus the policy context is in a period of flux with a change of government and the anticipated publication of the Green paper. It is against this shifting context that I-Sign has been delivering its programme of pilot activities since 2009.

Consequently questions of sustainability of I-Sign post DfE funding now need to address this matter in the light of the changed policy context. The SEN Green paper (DfE 2011a) emphasizes the importance of sustainability and looks to Voluntary and Community organizations to take forward this work through the VCS grant programme in which SEN represents just one area. Consequently there has been a shift away from discrete projects of work into which I-Sign began its work, to a new more systematic and holistic policy context. I-Sign needs to ensure it does not get squeezed out of the system during this process and that policy makers remain aware of some of the pressing

issues for the education of D/deaf children. The VCS competitive tendering process has already been implemented and successful projects informed of the outcomes but we understand a future call will be made in the future. Irrespective of this, the greater emphasis on free market principles (Free Schools, Academies, giving parents personalized funding to purchase their child's specialist services) presents a challenge for I-Sign in the future.

This changed policy context means that the pilot began and was designed for a policy rationale which has been superseded during its operation. This presents opportunities and threats to the continuation of I-Sign after the DfE funding ceases on 31 March 2011. Some of the I-Sign components will need continued public subsidy to be viable: training of BSL teachers and the Family Sign Language Curriculum (FSLC) while others may be sustainable of a fee paying basis (interpreter training). I-Sign has shown that it has been able to survive a changing policy context which has been in flux for a considerable time during the last 3 years. However, engaging with the new polity will require forethought and planning. We have emphasised that both the FSLC and BSL teachers require more investment post I-Sign funding. This needs to be understood by policy makers as a genuine need for some of the less strong in society rather than automatically imposing free market principles on these two groups.

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10. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Glossary

- Appendix 2: policy context at inception

- Appendix 3: Data collection questionnaires and interview templates

- Appendix 4: Progress against targets, I-Sign Consortium – objectives and Measurable Outputs updated March 2011

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY - ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

ACSW	Association of Communication Support Workers
ASLI	Association of Sign Language Interpreters
A1	Assessors award
BATOD	British Association of Teachers of the Deaf
BDA	British Deaf Association
BSL	British Sign Language
BSLTA	British Sign Language Training Agency
CILT	National Centre for Languages
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTLLS	Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector
CI	Cochlear Implant
CSW	Communication Support Workers
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
ECSW	Educational Communication Support Worker
ERADE	Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education
ESW	Education Support Worker
FE	Further Education
FSLC	Family Sign Language Curriculum
HE	Higher Education
HOSS	Head of Support Services
IIDP	Individual Interpreter Development Programme
JTI	Junior Trainee Interpreter
LA	Local Authority

LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MDPS	Merseyside Deaf People Society
MRSLI	Member of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters
NATED	National Association for Tertiary Education for Deaf People
NDCS	National Deaf Children's Society
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OCN	Open College Network
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PTLLS	Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
RNID	Royal National Institute for Deaf People
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
UCLAN	University of Central Lancashire
V1	Verifiers

APPENDIX 2: POLICY CONTEXT
AT INCEPTION

At its inception I-Sign was probably independent of any mainstream policy of DfE, being an opportunistic grant. However, it is important to understand the existing policy context and the links which can now be made to DfE policy. The overarching framework for SEN is the *Every Child Matters* Initiative, which in turn drives the *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy*. The SEN policy framework has been in flux during I-Sign's operation and is discussed in the paragraphs that follow. *Every Child Matters* required that every child should have the support they need to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. Implemented through the Children Act (2004) local authorities are required to work with children's trust partnerships to deliver this and involve children and young people in the process. The '2020 Children and Young people's workforce strategy' was part of a strategic workforce reform shaped by the *Children's Plan* the former government's plan "to make the UK the best country in the world for children to grow up in" (DCSF, 2008, p.6). The Workforce strategy was designed to enable anyone who works with children to be:

- "ambitious for every child and young person;
- excellent in their practice;
- committed to partnership and integrated working;
- respected and valued as professionals". (DCSF, 2008, p.6).

Despite these policy statements and strategies, the overarching policy context within which I -Sign has been delivered is one in which the position of sign language in education and early development is ambiguous. There is not yet a national policy statement, procedure or common approach to training of the children's workforce in BSL. Deaf status and the role of the language remains unconfirmed at home and at school despite the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) placing an obligation on national governments to recognise sign languages, provide interpreters, and provide equal citizenship and linguistic access. It can also be interpreted as calling for states to offer sign bilingual education (UN 2008).

Out of two million children and young people in England identified as having special educational needs between 35,000 and 55,000 are D/deaf children (of which approximately 25% will be use BSL as a first communication choice) and around 85% are taught in mainstream schools. (*Hands Up for Help*, campaign led by NDCS, NDCS: briefing note for I-Sign Jan 2010). NDCS also believes that there is no reason to suggest that deaf children cannot do well as other children, providing the right support is in place. However D/deaf children are 43% less likely to get five GCSEs including Maths and English at grades A* to C, compared with the results for all children taken together. The amount of support that they receive is very much determined by where they live rather than by what they need. Historically, families with special needs children were given low expectations about what their child can achieve at school and despite this they were expected to negotiate with different agencies in order to get the appropriate support that they needed for their child.

APPENDIX 3:   QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEW TEMPLATES

1. **Focus group/interview guide schedule for Parents with deaf children**
2. **Focus group/interview guide schedule for Interpreters**
3. **Focus group/interview guide schedule for BSL Tutors**
4. **List of questions for Merseyside Society for Deaf people and Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education**
5. **List of questions for Cardiff NDCS**

1. Focus group/interview guide schedule for Parents with deaf children

Introduction
Thank for coming
Introduce who we are and that we are an independent research team that does not work for any organisations that are involved in the BSL consortium.
Explain the purposes of carrying out an evaluation (show diagram of I-Sign)

- Merseyside Society for Deaf People (NDCS)

- Family Sign Curriculum Interactive and DVD

- Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (NDCS)

- (BDA) British Deaf Association

- Educational Support Worker Training

- And Continuing Professional Development for BSL tutors

- Signature

- Royal National Institute for Deaf (RNID)

- Courses for Interpreters and BSL tutors

- University of Central Lancashire (ULCAN)

- Nottingham Deaf Society (No input from I-sign)

- Cardiff (No input from I-sign)

We are interested in hearing their experiences and their views, (both positive and negative) and will be writing up the findings for the Department for Education.
Explain the format of how this will take place, it is okay for them to ask if they are not clear about anything and that there are no wrong or right answers.
To remind them that the session will be recorded on tapes and that the tapes will be destroyed once the report has been written up. So what they have to say will be treated in confidence and kept anonymous.

To get the participants to introduce themselves
Their name
………
…..
Make notes of the courses that they have completed
………
……………………………

Explain the interview will be in two parts
 Looking at what it was like for them before they were introduced to the
training/support/materials?
What is it like for them now that they have had access to using the
training/support/materials?
Background Information (please ring as most appropriate)

Age group 18 – 25   □   26 – 35 □   36 – 45 □   Over 45 □

Gender   Male □   Female □

Highest education achieved   No formal qualification   □
                                  GSEs   □
                                  NVQs   □
                                        College/University degree □
                                  Please state
………
……

Nationality   …………………………………….
How would you describe your ethnic origin?
□ White – British   □ Chinese
□ White – Irish   □ Other Asian background
□ Other White background   □ Mixed – White and Black
Caribbean
□ Black or Black British – Caribbean   □ Mixed – White and Black
African
□ Black or Black British – African   □ Mixed – White and Asian

Part one – before using the training materials (if attended more than one course, get
them to go through for each course they have applied to do)
How important is it to you that your family sign with your deaf child?
………
………
………
………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very important and no 5 not at all)
………….

Finding out about the training
How easy was it to access the information about the new course?
………
………

……
……………………………………………………………………………….
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very easy and no 5 not easy at all)
………….

How did you hear about the course?
……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………
What did you think would happen on the course?
……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………
What did you like about the course? (if necessary use prompt, i.e. venue, timing,
duration)
……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………
Before starting were you worried about anything about the course? If yes, please
explain?
……
……
……
…………………………………………………………………………..
How was it explained to you about your level of commitment or requirement that was
expected from you, prior to starting?
……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………….....
Were you happy with what they explained to you? If not, please explain?
   ……
……
……
…………………………………………………………………………………..

How often were you and your child frustrated when a breakdown in communication
occurred?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 not at all and no 5 very often)   ………….

What usually happened when there was a communication breakdown, how did you
cope?
……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………….

Starting the Course
How would you rate your signing ability prior to starting the course?

Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no 5 not able at all)
…………..
 What were your main reasons for starting this course? If necessary ask why this particular course?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

Since starting, how comfortable were you with the delivery of the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very comfortable and no. 5 not at all)
…………..

Part Two- since starting and completing the training course
What part of the course did you find most useful?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………..

What did you enjoy the most from being on the course?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

What did you like the least from being on the course?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

What difference has been made to your communication with your child since attending the course? (Please explain if any)
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

How confident do you feel now compared to how you were feeling prior to starting the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very confident and no 5 not at all)
…………..

If someone asked you what the course was like, how would you explain what it has been like for you?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

What would your advice be for other parents thinking of attending this course?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………….

And why?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………..
Is there anything that you think would help to improve the quality of the delivery of the course?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………..
Were you happy with the content that was covered? If no, please explain further?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………..
Have you noticed any differences in the following since starting the course?
  Your attitude towards using BSL
  Your fluency using BSL
  Your confidence in using BSL
Please explain any changes
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………
How would you rate your signing ability now with …………….? (Do make note of any difference and use this as a prompt to get them to explain further)
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no 5 not at all)   ………….
How often does communication breakdown with ……………….?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very often and no 5 not at all)   ………….
When communication does break down, what do you do now?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………

Would you recommend this course to others? If not, please explain why?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………..
Do you feel the course information imparted was at the right level? If no, please explain why?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………
Is there anything else that you would have liked to see covered that would have been useful to you to know about?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………..
Now that you have completed the course, what would you like to see happen next?

……
……
……,
……………………………………………………………………………………………

And why?

……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Did you feel you got sufficient on-going support from your trainer?   YES or NO
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very supported and no 5 not supported at all)   ………….

Did you feel you got enough support from your peer group?   YES or NO
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very supported and no 5 not supported at all)   ………….

Is there anything about the course in general that you feel could be improved on? How?
……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Has it made a difference that you have completed the course? If so, how?

……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

If using Family Sign Curriculum interactive website and/or DVD
What has it been like for you and for your family, prior to accessing the website?
……
……
……
……….

Can you explain the difference it has made on your family communication since accessing the website?
……
……
……
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

How often do you access to the website? Please ring the most appropriate
        Daily
Several times during the week
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Only looked at it once

What would you like to see happen in the future that would encourage better provision for parents with deaf children, wanting to learn BSL?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………….
……………………………………………………………………………………………
If we were to roll out different courses for parents what do you think would be the best way of doing this?
....
....
....
Some parents have had to pay for the signing courses, did you? Yes or No?

What do you think will happened if all signing courses for parents were not free?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………..
Thank you for your time

2. Focus group/interview guide schedule for Interpreters

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We are interested in hearing their experiences and their views, (both positive and negative) and will be writing up the findings for the Department for Education.
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To remind them that the session will be recorded on tapes and that the tapes will be destroyed once the report has been written up. So what they have to say will be treated in confidence and kept anonymous.
To get the participants to introduce themselves
Their name
……………………………………………………………………………………………
…..
Make notes of the courses that they have completed
……………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………….

Explain the interview will be in two parts
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What is it like for them now that they have had access to using the training/support/materials?
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Gender   Male □   Female □

Highest education achieved   No formal qualification   □
                                    GSEs   □
                                    NVQs   □
                                            College/University degree   □
                                            Please state
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………….

Nationality   ………………………………….   How would you describe your ethnic origin?

□ White British   □ Chinese
□ White Irish   □ Other Asian background
□ Other White background   □ Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
□ Black or Black British – Caribbean
□ Black or Black British – African   □ Mixed – White and Black African

                                             □ Mixed – White and Asian

Part one – before using the training materials (if attended more than one course, get
them to go through for each course they have applied to do)
Finding out about the training
How easy was it to access to the information about the new course?
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Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very easy and no 5 not easy at all)
………….

How did you hear about the course?
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What did you think would happen on the course?
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What attracted you to do this particular course? (if necessary use prompt, i.e. venue,
timing, duration)
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Before starting were you worried about anything about the course? If yes, please explain?

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How was it explained to you about your level of commitment or requirement that was expected from you, prior to starting?

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Were you happy with the explanation given? If not, please explain?

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Starting the Course

How would you rate your interpreting ability prior to starting the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no. 5 not at all)   ………….
What qualification(s) do you have so far? (Which Level – NVQ 3/ 4/ 5)
How would you rate your signing ability when working (interpreting) with deaf people?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no 5 not at all)   ………….
How would you rate your voice-over when working (interpreting) with deaf people?
                Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no 5 not at all)
………….
What was your reason for doing this particular course?

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Did your expectation match with the explanation you were given at the start of the course?

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After starting, how comfortable were you with the delivery of the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very comfortable and no. 5 not at all)
………….

Part Two- since starting and completing the training course
What did you feel was the most useful part of the course?

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What did you enjoy the most from being on the course?

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What did you like the least from being on the course?

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What difference has been made to your work since attending the course? (Please explain if any)

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How confident do you feel now compared to how you were feeling since completing the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very confident and no 5 not at all)
………….

How would you rate your interpreting ability since completing the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no 5 not at all)   ………….

Were you successful in obtaining the qualification that you applied to do? (Which Level – NVQ 3/ 4/ 5)

How would you rate your signing ability when working (interpreting) with deaf people now?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no 5 not at all)   ………….

How would you rate your voice-over ability when working (interpreting) with deaf people now?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very able and no 5 not at all)   ………….

If someone asked you what the course was like, how would you explain what it has been like for you?

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What would your advice be to other people who are thinking about attending this course?

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And why?

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Is there anything that you think would help to improve the quality of the delivery of the course?

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Were you happy with the content that was covered? If not, please explain further?
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Would you recommend this course to others? If not, please explain why?
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Do you feel the course information imparted was at the right level? If not, please explain why?
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Is there anything else that you would have liked to see covered that would have been useful to know?
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Now that you have completed the course, what would you like to see happen next?
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And why?
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Did you feel you got sufficient on-going support from your trainer?   YES or NO
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very satisfied and no 5 not satisfied at all)
………….

Did you feel you got enough support from your peer group?   YES or NO
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very supported and no 5 not supported at all)   ………….

Is there anything about the course in general that you feel could be improved on? How?
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Has it made a difference that you have completed the course? If so, how?
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What would you like to see happen in the future that would increase the number of qualified interpreters?
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Thank you for your time

3. Focus group/interview guide schedule for BSL Tutors

Introduction
Thank for coming
Introduce who we are and that we are an independent research team that does not work for any organisations that are involved in the BSL consortium.
Explain the purposes of carrying out an evaluation (show diagram of I-Sign)

- Merseyside Society for Deaf People (NDCS)

- Family Sign Curriculum Interactive and DVD

- Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education (NDCS)

- (BDA) British Deaf Association

- Educational Support Worker Training

- And Continuing Professional Development for BSL tutors

- Signature

- Royal National Institute for Deaf (RNID)

- Courses for Interpreters and BSL tutors

- University of Central Lancashire (ULCAN)

- Nottingham Deaf Society (No input from I-sign)

- Cardiff (No input from I-sign)

We are interested in hearing their experiences and their views, (both positive and negative) and will be writing up the findings for the Department for Education.
Explain the format of how this will take place, it is okay for them to ask if they are not clear about anything and that there are no wrong or right answers.
To remind them that the session will be recorded on tapes and that the tapes will be destroyed once the report has been written up. So what they have to say will be treated in confidence and kept anonymous.
To get the participants to introduce themselves
Their name
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
…..
Make notes of the courses that they have completed
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………

Explain the interview will be in two parts
 Looking at what it was like for them before they were introduced to the training/support/materials?
What is it like for them now that they have had access to using the training/support/materials?
Background Information (please ring as most appropriate)

Age group 18 – 25 □   26 – 35 □   36 – 45 □   Over 45 □

Gender   Male □   Female □

Highest education achieved   No formal qualification   □
                                  GSEs   □
                                  NVQs   □
                                  College/University degree □
                                  Please state
……………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………

Nationality   ………………………………….
How would you describe your ethnic origin?
□ White – British   □ Chinese
□ White – Irish   □ Other Asian background
□ Other White background   □ Mixed – White and Black
Caribbean
□ Black or Black British – Caribbean □ Mixed – White and Black African
□ Black or Black British – African □ Mixed – White and Asian Part one – before
using the training materials (if attended more than one course, get them to go through
for each course they have applied to do)
Finding out about the training
How easy was it to access to the information about the new course?
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Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very easy and no 5 not easy at all)
………….

How did you hear about the course?
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What did you think would happen?
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What did you like about the course? (if necessary use prompt, i.e. venue, timing,
duration)
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Before starting were you worried about anything about the course? If yes, please
explain?

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How was it explained to you about your level of commitment or requirement that was expected from you, prior to starting?

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Were you happy with what they explained to you? If not, please explain?

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Starting the Course
How would you rate your teaching ability prior to starting the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very good and no 5 not good at all)
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        What were your main reasons for starting this course? If necessary ask why this particular course?

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Since starting, how comfortable were you feeling with working through the course?
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very comfortable and no. 5 not easy at all)
…………..

Part Two- since starting and completing the training course
What did you feel you got most from doing the course?
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What did you enjoy the most from being on the course?
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What did you like the least from being on the course?
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The difference that has been made to your work since attending the course? (Please explain if any)
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How confident do you feel now compared to how you were feeling prior to starting the course?

Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very confident and no 5 not at all)

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If someone asked you what the course was like, how would you explain what it has been like for you?

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What would your advice be now that you have completed this?

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And why?

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Is there anything that you think would help to improve the quality of the delivery of the course?

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Were you happy with the content that was covered? If no, please explain further?

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Would you recommend this course to others? If not, please explain why?

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Do you feel the course information imparted was at the right level? If no, please explain why?

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Is there anything else that you would have liked to see covered that would have been useful to you to know about?

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Now that you have completed the course, what would you like to see happen next?

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And why?
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Did you feel you got sufficient on-going support from your trainer?   YES or NO
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very satisfied and no 5 not satisfied at all)
………….

Did you feel you got enough support from your peer group?   YES or NO
Give a number from 1 to 5 (with no. 1 being very satisfied and no 5 not satisfied at all)
………….

Is there anything about the course in general that you feel could be improved on? How?
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Has it made a difference that you have completed the course? If so, how?
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What would you like to see happen in the future that would increase the number of
qualified BSL tutors?
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Thank you for your time

4. List of questions for Merseyside Society for Deaf people and Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education

Background (Your involvement with the project)

Looking back to when you first submitted the proposal to be part of the FSC website and DVD/training programme, how have your achievements to date met with, altered from or exceeded your original expectations?

In your opinion, what are the benefits (anticipated and actual) of the FSC for parents, or other family members who wish to sign with their deaf children? How many have expressed interest and how many have enrolled on courses? Have any evaluations been collected from parents attending and if so, how this was done?

With the benefit of a certain degree of hindsight, what improvements might you have made in setting up and promoting the FSC? Or what might you have done differently, if anything?

Now that the FSC website is up and running, what are your future plans? Is NDCS hoping to extend the provision to families living in other areas? Please explain?

How has the training of BSL tutors on the FSC gone? Are there specific issues (positive/negative) that need to be addressed or recognised?
Has the FSC training been provided for deaf and hearing tutors in your area? How many?

In terms of the Consortium, what is NDCS's experience of working together with other organisations including your organisation? Can you see potential for future collaboration within the Consortium beyond this project?

Do you have any information about the Ladder of Learning? Whose initiative was this? How helpful has it been?

Is there anything you would like to tell us, or reflect on, to help with the evaluation of this project?

Thank you for your time

5. List of questions for Cardiff NDCS

Please provide a brief explanation of your background (Your involvement in working with parents in Cardiff and surrounding areas)

I am sure you are aware that NDCS have been doing some work in setting up the FSC website and DVD/ and BSL training programme to use FSC teaching materials in the NW and SW of England.
Have you been contacted by parents from your area expressing interest in this programme and if so, had this been a problem that they are located outside the remit area. (The reason I am asking this question is that I am trying to gauge the level of interest, by parents and professionals, shown in this project and how have you been able to explain the situation to them)

If there has been interest how was this captured?

Can you explain what normally happen should parents wish to learn to use Sign Language? What kind of provision is available for them and how relevant are these to be used with their deaf children? Would they be expected to pay, and if so, how much (roughly)?

What would you like to see happen in the next stage of the project, do you think this initiative should be rolled out to other areas? If so, what would you like to see happen?

Do you think there would be a sufficient number of people, with the right skills set, who would be able to carry out the courses for parents in your area and how do you think they could be best supported within this framework?

I assume you have seen the FSC materials, what are your personal thoughts about this package? I am aware one of you is a parent of a young deaf person, how much do you think these materials would have helped you had they been available when you needed this kind of input?

Is there anything that you would like the Evaluation team to be aware of and to raise points made in the final report about the FSC materials?

In terms of the Consortium, what is NDCS's experience of working together with other organisations? How useful do you think this has been? Can you see potential for future collaboration within the Consortium beyond this project?

Is there anything you would like to tell us, or reflect on, to help with the evaluation of this project in general?

Would it be possible for you to contact local parents who may be interested in participating in an interview to share their experiences of learning to sign and/or how they accessed this learning. Interviews can be via email or skype (typed dialogue) or by telephone, as we have a hearing researcher who would be able to conduct the telephone interview.

Thank you for your time

In this section we itemise the stated measurable outputs which I-Sign has presented. We have attempted to assess whether each objective is achieved or partly achieved or in some measure, in progress. I-Sign does not record its budgetary breakdown in such a way as to enable us to assess how much of an external subsidy there is for these activities.

In reading the table, it is important to recognise that the objective statements and the first column have been written by the Consortium as originally specified by DCSF and form part of the contract with DfE. Our analysis at this time is in columns 2 and 3.

Objective 1: increase awareness of BSL and choice for families with deaf and hearing impaired children to learn and communicate using BSL
A new interactive website and DVD aimed at tutors, parents and children will be developed. The delivery partners will use a variety of methods to deliver the curriculum to families including: videoconferencing, residential courses, individual and group tutoring.

Objective 1

Quantifiable Deliverables	June 2010	March 2011
Family Sign Language Curriculum DVD produced and disseminated	Website. No information about DVD: not yet released	√ yes
5,000 copies of the Family Sign Language Curriculum DVD produced and disseminated	Not yet released	5,000 printed, 627 distributed
Delivery of the curriculum to a minimum of 105 families in the South West and North West with minimum delivery targets: Exeter Academy 75 families, MSDP 30 families	April 2010 14 families receiving FSLC training but 84 families on the waiting list; 22 families still to be found for the SW. Potential of 44 families for NW – which would exceed the expected target	58 SW 51 NW (dec 2010)
Findings from regional delivery phase to be disseminated, including via the NDCS website	the website exists but it does not have regional findings on it	

Objective 1

Overall measurable outputs and outcomes	June 2010	March 2011
Increased take-up of tobjective 3	36 families in NW on waiting	√ yes

he Family Sign Language Curriculum, particularly the South West and the North West	list, 48 on waiting list in SW, 3 families outside pilot regions on waiting list. Comments from families on NDCS website indicate some demand but 22 families still to be sourced for SW	
Parents and wider family report they are better able to communicate effectively with their deaf children	Only 14 families have been through the course (April 2010 – does not include any wider family members yet Two families have commented very favourably about the course *Comment SW parent; " Can you tell us what you have gained from i-sign in knowledge/externally funded qualification?" "loads!!, vocab useful. Daughter 4 months when on course so using vocab right from the start. Tips of communicating well, gesture, games, meeting other families. No qualification"* *Comment from SW parent: "We had level 1 so some signing... but it wasn't appropriate to the home or focused on our child. The family course was much better.. really good focused signing on things at home. We could also bring questions about how Deaf people would manage certain situations... so it was great. I wanted to go on and do level II after.. the tutor was brilliant, so inspirational*	√ yes all interviewees responded positively on this point
Fewer incidences of emotion or behavioural difficulties that often result from communication breakdown;	This question to be tackled in focus groups at a later stage	No data
Less language development deficit as deaf children will be 'overseeing' a broader and more diverse vocabulary within the home and with the tutor;	At present we have detected no data to answer this question: NDCS collect numbers and expressions of interest , but this impact data	No data

	is not yet available. However, it may not be possible to assess this aspect within the 2 year timescale. The numbers are likely to be too small to provide statistically strong evidence of this	
Parents with a greater understanding of different communication strategies with their deaf child and thus better informed about the educational choices they will need to make	We do not yet have the evaluation sheets used by NDCS. There will be interview data at a later stage to determine this. *Parent 1 (SW) reports receiving tips on communicating well, gesture, vocabulary* *Parent 2 (SW) appreciated being able to ask how Deaf people cope in certain situations*	√ yes
Development of a Family Sign Language Curriculum tutor training module to give tutors the skills they need to deliver the curriculum to families of deaf children	1 professional training day planned for SW in June, 4 teachers trained in NW	√ yes
Less social isolation for the deaf child and their family;	This is a challenging objective and in a sense, circular. By taking part in any group meeting (as in I-sign) the family becomes more connected than before. The issue is to what extent course meeting s are better than simply bringing together groups of families. *Parent 1 (SW) reports benefiting from meeting other families no other families other than the isign course attendees are known to this family* *Parent 2 (SW) less isolated – lives in Bristol already involved in other groups " there are lots of support structures in place.. 1st diagnosis, Acorns group.."* *Gave also attended other NDCS events*	√ yes interviewees report favourably on peer support leading to NDCS prioritising FSC residential weekends
Greater number of parents taking	No data from The Consortium	No data

BSL courses, subsequent to their completion of the Family Sign Language Curriculum	on this. It seems unlikely that it can be proven in any case as there is no baseline data available on the previous numbers of parents joining BSL classes. Since these were the only classes available, it is likely that many parents will have sought them out. Showing that there is now greater take up of courses would have to be tied to proving the link to the I sign course, the increased registration of parents and probably, also the greater availability of classes through the linked objective of the BDA. There is also a problem in that parent courses in I-Sign may finish too late in the lifetime of this assessment for there to be any meaningful data on future take up of classes. *Parent 1 is in touch with a deaf inclusion worker once a fortnight which includes basic sign language instruction. Has also done the NDCS newly identified weekend* *Parent 2 expressed an interest in going on to do level2*	
Sustainable funding secured for ongoing delivery of the Family Sign Language Curriculum at Exeter Academy and MSDP	Not yet. There is some market testing of pricing. The Consortium also feels it has to await Government policy. Our view is that this is not the best strategy at this time and that it might be better to seek out sources of funding, or means to reduce cost and to increase the reach of the course (say, by improving the online content) might be more appropriate in thinking about future sustainability	Exeter secured some money from LSC but data on sustainability will not be available until after March 2011
Creation of new regional and local centres of excellence for the Family Sign Language Curriculum in addition to Exeter and MSDP	No evidence of this has been presented so far.	Exeter makes positive claims to this. MDPS appears less

		well advanced down this route

Objective 1

Measurement Proposed		
Monitoring the number and range of families taking up places on Family Sign Language Curriculum courses run at Exeter and MSDP;	Some data is available by May 14 families have done course - 98 on still on the waiting list. We are unclear as to the measurement of 'range' which is being used.	√ yes for numbers we have not seen data on 'range'
Recording the number of families registering to use the Family Sign Language Curriculum website;	There are details produced of unique visitors – this might be turned in to a target for each month which would allow the tracking of progress here.	unchanged
Online evaluation of the website by visiting families and tutors;	This has not yet happened.	
Monitoring the number of Family Sign Language Curriculum DVDs distributed to families of deaf children;	None so far, the DVD is not ready	NDCS records numbers distributed to "families and professionals"
Feedback questionnaires included within the Family Sign Language Curriculum DVDs;	We have not seen the DVD	
Evaluative questionnaires from families (parents and children) completing the family sign language courses at Exeter Academy and MSDP;	We have sight of the questionnaires to be used but have not been able to examine completed returns; nor have we seen the analysis of the returns.	
Evaluation reports from tutors at Exeter Academy and MSDP;	Not received	
Monitoring the number of local authorities agreeing to fund places on the Family Sign Language Curriculum courses;	No data as yet.	
Ongoing tracking of new regional and local centres of excellence for the Family Sign Language Curriculum by establishing a database of family participants and then tracking their progression onto other sign language courses;	The consortium is leaving this till phase 2	We have not seen final outputs data not happening as of Dec 2010
Exeter Academy and MSDP to monitor the number of parents taking up BSL courses subsequent to their completion of the Family Sign	So far 14 people have had training we have not got details about tracking but the NDCS has set in place a	We have not seen final outputs data not happening as of

Language Curriculum by establishing a database of family participants and then tracking their progression onto other sign language courses	pre, post and 3 month later evaluation system. We will explore the further on the nature of the database.	Dec 2010

Objective 2: *Increase demand from the children's workforce to improve BSL skills, including to higher levels, to meet the needs of BSL users and ultimately improve Every Child Matters outcomes.*
A new qualification will be developed for Educational Communication Support Workers (ECSWs) that includes BSL to Level 3 standard (A Level equivalent). A learning ladder will also be created to map existing and proposed new BSL qualifications to provide a consistent and coherent framework for ECSW qualifications.
Objective 2

Quantifiable Deliverables ?	June 2010	March 2011
Not specified.	The ladder of learning has been presented to the consortium members. It appears to be primarily a list of courses which have been reported. It is also referred to as a map. It is unclear how this is to be publicised and how it can be used by learners without curriculum content, dates and format. As it stands it appears to be a snapshot and does not entail any system for agencies to update their offerings nor for the site itself to employ some dynamic database technology. This might be investigated further.	The revised ladder of learning was presented to the February steering committee and rejected as unsatisfactory. We have not seen a revised version

Objective 2

Overall measurable outputs	June 2010	March 2011
New accredited qualification(s) for ECSWs appropriate to those working in both the 0-16 and post 16 education sectors;	This is now said to be impossible due to different criteria used by post and pre 16 agencies; consequently the strategy is now to encourage parents to ask for Level 3 qualifications in the statement. It is not obvious how this strategy can be	Post 16 pilot now established in Exeter to deliver the Signature Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker)

	turned into a measurable outcome. Presumably this alteration to contract will be re-negotiated with DfE.	
Increased demand for high level BSL courses across the children's workforce due to requirements of new qualification;	No data. The aim is to promote upskilling by asking parents to ask for L3 minimum in children's statements. As indicated above, it is difficult to see how new measurable outcomes are to be instigated.	No data
Simplified structured ladder of learning BSL, allowing ease of recognition of qualifications across the sector	A document exists (see above). It does not seem to be user friendly. It is intended that it will be hosted by CILT but there are issues around potential learners detecting it there..	These issues remain also quality issuesof the ladder of learning – see above

Objective 1

Measurement Proposed ?		
	Not active at present.	unchanged

Objective 3: Increase availability of BSL tutors, courses and interpreters, including to higher levels. A new teacher training programme will be developed that meets the new teacher qualifications and standards for people working in further education. Course delivery will be used as a mechanism for vocational training that existing or trainee BSL tutors or interpreting tutors can access in order to undertake qualifications and gain vocational work experience.

Objective 3

Quantifiable Deliverables ?	June 2010	March 2011
Not specified at this time	None specified	None specified

Objective 1

Overall measurable outputs	June 2010.	March 2011
Teachers: Academic route: 30 teachers (of BSL or interpreting) achieving CTTL and registering with Institute for Learning (IFL)	UCLAN supplied data is difficult to follow. Steering committee statement says that: 4 deaf people(NW) are attending UCLAN teacher training course and 5 deaf people from SW attend the UCLAN course. Earlier statements by RNID suggest 30 people have been through the course and 3 dropped out.	from outside the pilot regions steering committee report shows 9 successful completions (Dec 2010) in addition 19 currently attending the course

Teachers:Vocational route: 6 teachers competent and qualified to deliver Level 3 certificate and NVQ 3 BSL assessment	ERADE 32 students, RNID 52 students BSL tutors how to teach L3 course : 6 tutors (SW only)	6 teachers
2 teachers competent and qualified to deliver Level 4 Language coaching and NVQ 4 BSL via vocational route	There appears to be no 'how to teach level 4' programme however materials are being made available to and BSL 3-4 course in NW and SW CPD events are also being run in SW and NW	unchanged
2 teachers competent and qualified to deliver BSL/English interpreting NVQ	1 hearing person in NW on a teacher training programme (interpreting) with 3 hearing people from SW also doing teacher training (interpreting/ECSW	unchanged
• 6 A1 assessors (from same beneficiary group as above) • 4 Internal Verifiers (BSL tutors IV assessor award , Hearing people IV award)	• A1 1 deaf person (NW), A1 2 Deaf people (SW), 1 hearing person (NW) A1, A1 2 hearing people (SW) • NW no BSL IV award tutors, SW 1 deaf person IV award	• 3 more Deaf people studying A1 in SW. Numbers of hearing people unchanged • VI award, 1 additional Deaf person (NW) 1 additional hearing person (SW)
To provide 6 tutor workshops per region from January 2009-July 2010, to test both mainstream and special CPD options, that meets IFL requirements:	4 tutors in each region trained to deliver FSL (8 in total) 6 CPD events (SW) and 6 CPD events (NW). The detail is hard to match with the specification of the I-Sign consortium.	We understand CPD numbers revised due to viring of BDA budget to FSC
to develop a team of subject learning coaches in each region;	No data and not mentioned by anyone so far	No data

to build links with mainstream teacher support mechanisms, e.g. CTTLS and provide a sustainable model of provision;	UCLAN appears to be promoting CTTLS and PTTLs in Preston. Courses free but next intake will be funded by students, subject to HE funding regime.	Sustainability data not available to us at this time
To deliver or contribute to a national conference promoting the developed model;	Not yet	Again this will be post March 2011
Courses: 12 BSL level 3 and 4 courses targeted specifically at the Children's workforce, aspiring BSL tutors needing to formalise their own linguistic skill, and trainee interpreters;	Not yet – not targeted at children's work force specifically. There are already courses in NW and they provide materials to these. L3 & 4 courses are set up in SW but not targeted at this group	Signature ECSW courses now being piloted in Exeter and Coventry
Interpreters: 4 interpreter training courses resulting in 18 individuals developing interpreter training qualifications towards the new proposed status of ECSW, or towards registration with the Independent Registration Panel	Qualifications towards MRSLI or JTI not ECSW. Numbers of participants exceed the 18 specified Interpreters, NW: 5 people on interpreting award programme (MRSLI), NW - 7 people on JTI programme. SW 5 people doing L4 interpreting award programme (MRSLI) 15 people on waiting list for JTI programme. In addition SW L3 programme 24 people have completed, 27 learners, L4 5 people waiting for this to start NOTE: it seems that there needs to be some re-negotiation of the contract here as the ECSW component is not applicable at this time.	Interpreters, NW: 3 achieved interpreting award programme (MRSLI), NW – 4 achieved JTI status, 1 achieved TI status. SW 4 achieved L4 interpreting award programme (MRSLI) 15 people started JTI course. In addition SW L3 programme 44 people have completed, 6 learners, 11 people achieved L4 award

NOTE: it is very difficult to match up the data presented to us with the specified goals. Numbers presented (in the goals) are extremely low by DfE standards and a much stronger case on the multiplier effect would be in the Consortium's interests here

Objective 3

Measurement Proposed		
Monitoring and recording numbers of courses delivered	Yes this is happening – although data attributable	unchanged

	to DfE funding is not apparent in the returns we have seen.	
Monitoring and recording numbers of learners recruited;	Yes this is happening	√ yes
Monitoring and recording employment, or family, status of learners;	We haven't seen the evaluation / monitoring forms	no
Collating qualitative feedback on learner experience of course delivery;	Preston are doing this and have made changes to the course as the result. NDCS have their own evaluation forms not yet seen, RNID Exeter MSDP not seen	
Monitoring and recording numbers undergoing registration (IFL and IRP);		No data
Monitoring volume and content of tutor workshops;	Yes CPD, How to teach level 3, teacher training in UCLAN teacher training for hearing interpreters, tutor training for FSL numbers are kept, we have not seen the curriculum. It would be useful to develop an e version which could be distributed post pilot	unchanged

Collating qualitative feedback on same	No data	We have not seen any evaluation summaries

- Overall, it is clear that there is a great deal of activity carried out by Consortium members. Considerable effort has gone into achieving the specified outputs.
- After considerable externally produced difficulties and delay with the ECSW workstream, the development of a pre-16 ECSW qualification has not happened but the post 16 Signature Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker) has received accreditation from Ofqual, and the qualification specification and regulations for this are complete and on the Signature website. Coventry and Exeter are now pilot centres for this qualification.
- The Ladder of Learning was returned by the Steering Committee in February 2011 for further work and modification including removal of names of companies and the addition of visual signposts. We have not seen the revised version
- The hubs were delayed until stage 2 but appear to be formed very loosely around ERADE and MDSP. ERADE in particular has said that it has

benefited as a centre of excellence with a much broader portfolio of courses ranging from FSC to interpreter training and as a pilot centre for the new Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (Communication Support Worker)

- Interpreter training has been provided by RNID in NW and SW. Outputs seem satisfactory. Likewise BSL tutor training through UCLAN and BDA has proceeded as planned. Courses are on-going.
- FSC has met most of its targets – we have not yet seen a final update on the outputs and not in a position to say how many DVDs have been sent to families

Although at the interim report stage we recommended closer Consortium working across and between workstreams. This has been difficult to realise in practice at the operational level. It remains our recommendation to maximise benefits and added value for any future Consortium working.