

Freedom of Information request 1046/2015

Received 17/3/15

Published

Information request

Is there any documents relating to British Sign Language Bill or British Sign Language Act? Is there any papers to discuss about deaf people want BSL Act in UK? (Scotland already introduced BSL Bill at the moment but not UK).

2. What the government are doing for Deaf people using their rights under UN Convention on the Rights on the Persons with Disabilities?

Guidance from UN Convention on the Rights on the Persons with Disabilities

The Convention mentions sign language seven times in five different articles. These articles are:

Article 2 – Definition, Article 9 – Accessibility, Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information, Article 24 – Education, Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

Are the government going to introduce BSL Bill in UK based on UN Convention on the Rights on the Persons with Disabilities which mentioned 7 times for sign language rights?

DWP response

I can confirm that we hold information falling within the description specified in your request. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act the Department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing your request further.

You also asked about what the Government is doing for Deaf people under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and whether the Government is going to introduce a BSL Bill.

In June 2013 Sir Malcolm Bruce MP tabled a Private Member's Bill: Communication Support (Deafness). The Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the session. This means the Bill will make no further progress.

The Government is committed to the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention) and recognises the importance of effective communication in enabling disabled people to achieve their full potential.

The Government recognised BSL as a language in its own right in March 2003. There are currently no plans to introduce BSL legislation in the UK.

The Government believes that good accessible services are the best ways to remove or overcome the barriers BSL users and people with hearing loss often face. The Equality Act 2010 already means employers, service providers and public bodies have to provide services in BSL when it is reasonable for them to do so. More information about the Equality Act can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance>

In line with the Convention's provisions about involving disabled people and their organisations in policy making government departments regularly meet with representatives from deaf people's organisations including Action on Hearing Loss, the British Deaf Association and Scope to discuss how their policies can help meet the needs of Deaf people and those with hearing loss.

In his written ministerial statement on Access to Work, on the 12 March 2015, the Minister of State for Disabled People announced that we would be continuing to work closely with deaf Access to Work users and the Crown Commercial Service to develop a framework for translation services including British Sign Language. This will guarantee quality standards and set transparent rates from summer 2015. We will also build on this by working with deaf people and stakeholder groups to undertake a market review of BSL interpretation provision to explore long term improvements in the market. The full statement can be seen here: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2015-03-12/HCWS372/>

NHS England is developing a new 'accessible information standard' which will provide clear guidance to health and social care organisations on the steps they need to take to ensure that disabled patients, carers and service users receive information in appropriate formats and communication support, if they need it. This will include the provision of interpreters or BSL users for people with hearing loss. More details of how the standard is being developed can be found here: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/patients/accessibleinfo-2/>

The Department for Business Innovation and Skills have agreed to fund Action on Hearing Loss to do further research into the impact of learning to lip-read. This will assess the benefits of accessing a package of lip-reading and hearing support, especially for those wishing to move into or stay into employment; and, will explore a 'best model' for delivering lip-reading tuition.