BAI Guidelines
Irish Sign Language

Introduction

In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Broadcasting Act 2009, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland has set out the rules required under Section 43(1)(c), to which it has given the title *Access Rules*. The Access Rules were launched on 14th May 2012, and are effective from 15th May 2012. A copy of the Access Rules is available on www.bai.ie or by request from the Authority.

This is the *BAI Guidelines - Irish Sign Language* document. In this document the BAI outlines the general and technical standards required in relation to Irish Sign Language provision. These guidelines are intended to support the implementation of the BAI Access Rules regarding Sign Language. The BAI acknowledges the assistance of the 'Guidance On Standards for Sign Language' document produced by Ofcom, in the preparation of this document. The guidelines may be changed from time to time, as deemed appropriate.

Irish Sign Language
Irish Sign Language is the indigenous language of the deaf community in Ireland. It is a visual, spatial language with its own syntax and complex grammatical structure. Each sign language is particular to the country of origin. The targets outlined in the Access Rules refer to Irish Sign Language provision.

1.   Format
There are two ways of providing sign language access to programmes:

(i)   **Interpretation.** A person interprets and signs live or recorded programmes or programme segments. The image of such an interpreter is usually superimposed on a programme. This is referred to later in this document as an overlay insert.

(ii)   **Presentation.** A sign language presenter, narrator or reporter provides the main language in the programme or programme segment. The signs are then interpreted into a 'voice over', with the addition of subtitles or captions as appropriate.

Both presentation and interpretation are valid methods of meeting the requirements of the Access Rules.

2.   General Requirements

2.1   The form of sign language provision
Under the current technical arrangement of the analogue transmission system signed programmes can only be broadcast in an open format.

2.2   Signing competence
Broadcasters should ensure that sign language interpreters have a level of competence and fluency in Irish Sign Language.

2.3   Off-screen sounds

The sign language interpreter or presenter should indicate the presence of off-screen sounds (e.g. a ringing telephone, the knocking of a door or a gun shot) where these are important to the understanding of the programme.

2.4   Synchronising

Sign language interpretation should start at the same time as speech. This may not always be practical during the interpretation of live programmes.

The use of autocues has been found to be a useful aid to deaf interpreters and can help towards synchronism.

The timing of signed sentences should be as close to speech as possible. Equally with sign language presentation, a "voice over" sentence should also be as close to the sign language as possible.

It should be noted, however, that Irish Sign Language and the English language have a different grammatical structure so that the two cannot match each other directly. Every effort, where practicable, should be made to provide equivalent information to all viewers.

2.5   Monitoring

Broadcasters should monitor the effectiveness of the service through contact with deaf people and their representatives.

2.6   Apology for loss of service

Where practical, a visual caption or subtitle should be displayed when there is a breakdown in the service.

3.   Guidelines specific to Irish Sign Language interpretation

3.1   Quality of display

The presentation of the signer on the display screen should be of sufficient size and resolution to show all movements of the full upper trunk together with arms, hands and fingers, shoulder, neck and all relevant facial movements and expressions. All important gestures that convey meaning through sign language must be easily and accurately recognised.

3.2   Size and shape of overlaid inserts

The size of the overlay must ensure that the body and facial expressions referred to above are easily discernible from normal viewing distances. Where practicable a signer's image, when at rest, that is notionally framed to occupy at least one sixth of the picture area would normally be sufficient to ensure this condition is met.

For programmes primarily aimed at deaf people and in the "open" format a useful technique, can be to reduce the visual image by, for example, 25 per cent and use the subsequent blank area to place the interpreter.

3.3   Choice of dress and background colours

It is important that the person signing can be clearly distinguished, for example by means of contrasting plain colours and suitable lighting. The visual appearance of the interpreter (e.g. choice of clothing and dress accessories) should not cause undue distraction to the viewer.

3.4   Speaker identification

This can be achieved by the signer using such techniques as referencing to a person by shifts in the eye gaze and body positioning or giving the speaker's name and reflecting his or her manner. (This technique is known as characterisation).