

Signs of God information sheet.

Conducting a marriage service at which a BSL/English Interpreter is present.

Information for the interpreter:

The Interpreter will need as much information as possible to enable him/her to prepare for the service. This information should be sent to the interpreter before the wedding.

A FULL TEXT of the service including hymns and readings – please don't assume the interpreter will have a copy of your church's prayer or hymn book, or a Bible

Text or notes of the Minister's sermon

A note of the names of those to be married.

The Sign Language Interpreter will be a professional who will seek to work with you in every way. He/she may not be a practising Christian. You may wish to invite him/her to join you for prayer before the service, but you should not make the assumption that he/she will accept.

Practical considerations:

If the couple to be married is Deaf, it may be better to use two interpreters so one can concentrate on the couple and the other on the congregation, otherwise sight lines can be very complicated. *(See note opposite)

In the case of a Deaf couple, the interpreter should stand beside the officiating minister.

In a Church of England or Church in Wales Marriage the interpreter should sign the Register as a witness to the marriage. (Anglican Marriage in England and Wales – a Guide to the Law for Clergy para14.4(ii))

The marriage service rubrics state that for the vows and at the exchange of rings, the bride and groom should hold hands. This is not possible when those being married are using Sign Language.

Language issues

The concept of "repeat after me" for the marriage vows may need some explaining. This should be done at the rehearsal, or other ways explored. The couple may make their vows in spoken English or BSL with appropriate interpreter support.

Some Deaf people may prefer to use English for the vows and responses. This is a matter of personal preference and should be respected. They may still require a Sign Language Interpreter.

Another practical consideration:

*During the vows, if the Church lay out makes it possible, the interpreter should move to the side of the minister that makes it possible for Bride and Groom to look at each other AND the interpreter at the same time. Alternatively, use one interpreter for Bride and one for Groom. This is very effective if there is enough room and funding allows.

NB It is lawful for a Marriage Service in an Anglican Church to be conducted entirely in BSL. If non-signing people are present the proceedings must be interpreted into English. Since Marriage is a legal contract, *Signs of God* advises that the interpreter should meet the national standards for interpreting. Contact us for information.