

## Language Policy

### 1.1 Policy

This policy details the use of language across the services. As an organisation, Reach Deaf Services values ISL as a language and places great importance on ensuring that it facilitates effective communication at all times with those engaged in our services. It is the expectation that all staff will promote an ISL and Deaf aware environment. Reach Deaf Services provides mandatory training in ISL and all staff will receive training to an ISL QQI level 4 standard. An ability to use ISL competently is an essential requirement of the role when working in Reach Deaf Services.

### Definitions

- *ISL*: Irish Sign Language is the sign language of Ireland, used primarily in the Republic of Ireland.
- *Deaf and Hard of Hearing*: for the purpose of this policy, Deaf and Hard of Hearing refers to those whose first and preferred language is ISL , who are partially Deaf or unable to hear. It refers to both boarders and staff.

### 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Describe how Irish Sign Language will be used as the primary mode of communication with all staff members in communicating with Deaf boarders, service users their family members and colleagues.
- Reinforce that it is the responsibility of staff members to be or become efficient in the use of ISL
- Ensure we create and maintain an inclusive, safe and effective environment for boarders, service users and staff
- Create clear expectations for those working in the organisation.

### 1.3 Procedure

- Staff will be expected to be proficient in signing and the use of ISL will be regularly monitored in practice through observations, formal supervision, performance management objectives and internal audits.

- The use of and understanding ISL is an essential requirement to work in Reach Deaf Services, ensuring the safety and well-being of all boarders, service users and staff is maintained
- Staff will be expected to use ISL on arrival to the workplace and throughout the working day
- Staff are required to use ISL in the presence of Boarder, service users and staff
- Staff should encourage Boarders and service users to use ISL where peers are present to ensure there are no incidents of exclusion and to promote their identity
- Boarders and service users may choose the means by which they communicate with their Key Workers and other staff
- Where a boarder or service user expresses their communication preference is to use spoken English, while we will respect this, staff must explain how this may unintentionally exclude others in group situations. Staff should facilitate these individual conversations through the Boarder`s or service users preference in a private setting
- Reach Deaf Services are committed to the provision of QQI accredited ISL, Linguistic and Deaf awareness courses for all employee`s as relevant to their role and to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Staff being able to communicate effectively with Boarders, service users and colleagues is critical to the fulfilment of the aims of providing holistic focused care and supports.
- Where new employees are not proficient at the time of their start date they will be expected to successfully complete QQI Level 3 and 4 in ISL over an agreed amount of time i.e. within the first two years of employment. The level of proficiency and expectations required is specified in all job descriptions for all roles.
- Support will be provided to staff if required to bring them up to the necessary standard through all means available.
- Where staff are not achieving ISL requirements, additional supports will be put in place
- Through the implementation of this policy, effective use of ISL is an essential requirement of all of the roles that interface with boarders, service users and staff within Reach Deaf Services
- Provision of interpreters will be made where necessary so that meetings, training and other events can take place. This should reduce as staff become more efficient in the use of ISL.
- Where there is no interpreter present staff are expected to communicate through ISL in an inclusive manner for all and the team should work together to support this communication.

- Reach Deaf Services will celebrate ISL and other Deaf awareness events that are important to boards and service users and will advocate for the recognition of ISL and the access rights for the people we support.