

Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)

Annual Service Report 2020



Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) is the national organisation for sign language interpreting in Ireland. An independent not for profit charitable organisation (Company No: 434358, CHY: 17461), with registered offices in the Deaf Village Ireland (DVI), Dublin 7, SLIS is supported and funded by Citizens Information Board (CIB). SLIS advocates for the right to Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreting services, and leads on the development of infrastructure for the sector.

The SLIS strategic plan for 2020-2023 inclusive provides the vision that “All Deaf people live as full and equal citizens”, and the SLIS mission is “To advocate for, develop, and make available, quality interpreting services to Deaf people and service providers in Ireland.”

SLIS provide a range of interpreting services to both individuals and organisations, including:

- A 24/7 emergency service to arrange for sign language interpreters in crises situations. **Emergency Mobile: 087 672 5179.**
- **A referral service** linking service providers and Deaf people to interpreters, such as for **GP appointments**, for public information events or services.
- A support and access service reducing barriers and supporting service providers to **increase accessibility to Deaf people.**
- A **Social Interpreting Fund** to cover interpreting costs for funerals & hardship cases.
- The **Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS)**, providing a live video link to an Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter for access to public and other services and supporting the social inclusion of Deaf Irish Sign Language (ISL) users.
- Supports to enhance **quality standards** for professional sign language interpreters and their customers, including the development and administration of **a Register for sign language interpreters.**

Governance

Patron: Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland.

SLIS Board of Directors 31/12/2020: Nuala Crowe Taft (Chairperson), Caroline McGrotty (Vice Chairperson), Patrick Stagg (Secretary), Peter Hughes, Ronan Lowry, Pat Matthews, Margaret Mulcaire, Susan O’Callaghan and Des O’Leary.

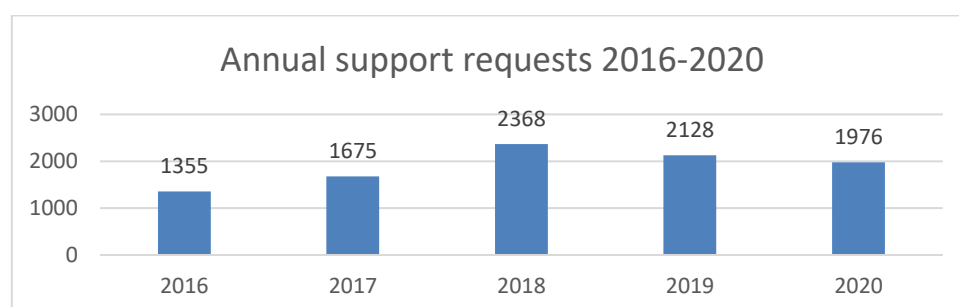
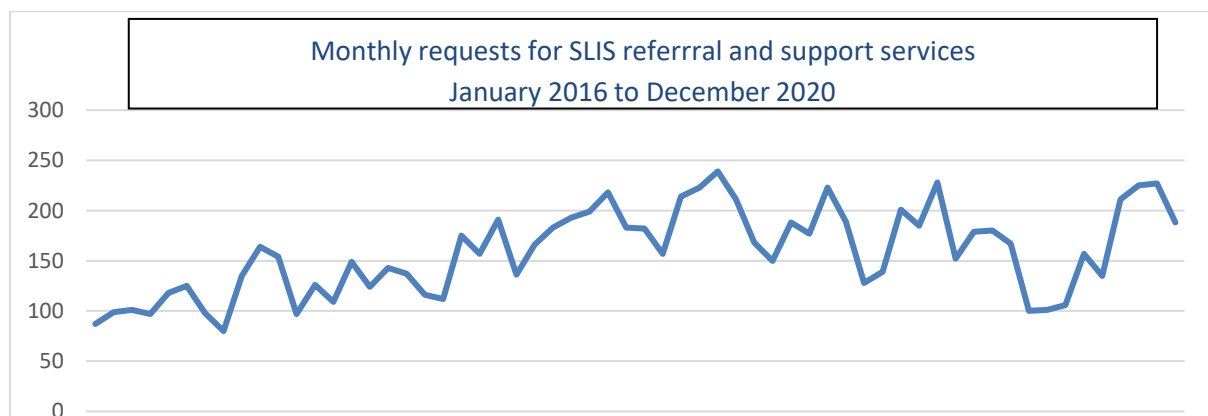
Staff 31/12/2020: John Stewart – National Manager, Lianne Quigley - Finance Officer, Gemma Devine & Mary Gavin - Administrator Booking Officers, Susan Conroy & Corinne Kilkenny - IRIS Administrators, Margaret O’Connor– Quality Development Officer, Sofiya Kalinova - Project Officer, and a team of Sign Language Interpreters (for IRIS service including IRIS APP) Aoife Blake, Fiona Ivory, Leanne Saurin, Sarah Falconer, Gemma Shannon, Isabelle Walsh, Carri O’Donnell, Kate Privett, and Imelda Gibbons.

SLIS referral, access and support services

An integral part of SLIS work is to link an organisation or Deaf person to interpreters to meet specific face-to-face sign language interpreting needs. SLIS provides this referral service free of charge to service providers and the Deaf community. The referral service includes a 24/7 Emergency service when interpreters are required for medical or legal emergencies. This is usually used by hospitals (A&E) and Garda Stations and the Deaf community. SLIS is often the first point of contact for the Deaf community, Deaf organisations and services in resolving difficulties in accessing rights to interpretation. SLIS also operates a Social Interpreting Fund, mainly for funerals or removals, and sign language interpreters charge a reduced fee for these assignments. SLIS also developed Guidelines for the development of a scheme to meet the requirements of Section 9 of the ISL Act (known as “the voucher scheme”).

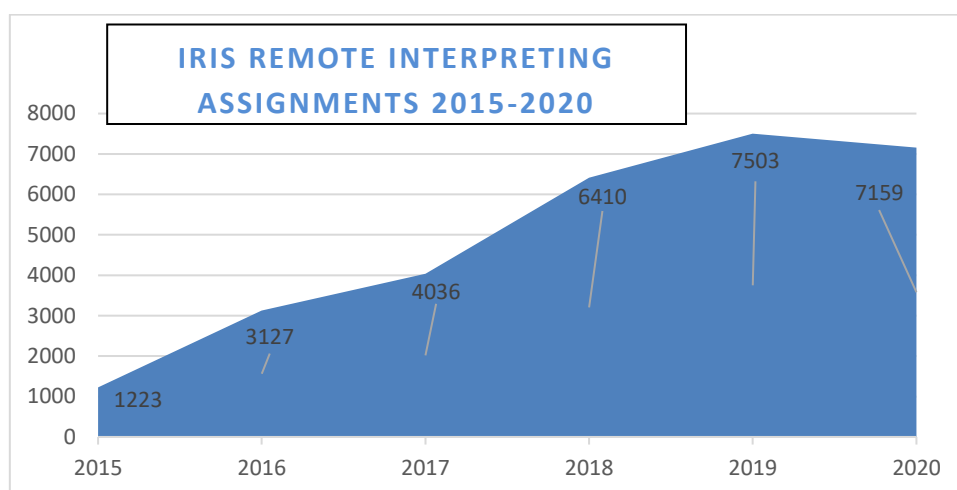
In 2020, we received 1,975 requests for support, with the reduction mainly due to COVID restrictions. This is a reduction of 7% on the 2,128 requests in 2019.

- 633 referral requests for an interpreter in 2020 – with 433 or 70% successfully filled. The total of 633 requests is a 41% decrease on the 1,073 referral requests in 2019.
- 307 Access support requests in 2020 – 258 or 84% were successfully resolved. Total of 307 requests is an 18% decrease on the 373 Access support requests in 2019.
- 1,034 GP/Primary Care Access scheme requests in 2020 – 979 or 95% successfully filled. Total of 1,034 requests is a 52% increase on the 682 GP/Primary Care Access scheme requests in 2019. This increase is also due to COVID as the HSE extended the scheme to all Deaf people (not just medical card holders) for the duration of the pandemic.



IRIS - Irish Remote Interpreting Service

IRIS provides a live video-link to an Irish Sign Language interpreter. The aim is to reduce the inequalities the Deaf community face and enhance social inclusion. IRIS is not suitable for all purposes, but provides a complimentary service to face-to-face interpreting. Access to a remote interpreter is provided for free to Deaf people and public services. Organisations can use IRIS to ensure their services are accessible to Deaf clients and comply with legislations (Equal Status, Disability and ISL Acts), as well as Consumer Protection Codes and charters. Remote interpreting is referenced in the ISL Act 2017. In 2020, CIB funded the development of a remote interpreting APP to enhance access for Deaf people to public and other services using the IRIS service. The App is being piloted by CIB in collaboration with SLIS/IRIS in 2020/2021.



In 2020, IRIS provided 7,159 remote interpreted assignments. There were 7,049 remote interpreted assignments on the mainstream IRIS service in 2020, and 110 interpreted assignments on the remote interpreting APP. The remote interpreting APP started on 16 November (2 hours per weekday) and continued in December (4 hours per weekday). From January to June 2021 the App was available from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. This corresponds to a 6% decrease on the 7,503 assignments completed on IRIS in 2019.

CIB approved additional capacity for SLIS to provide IRIS during the pandemic, including on Sundays and public holidays from 23rd March to 23rd December. CIB also supported SLIS to recruit remote interpreters, and IRIS is now available:

- 9 am – 8 pm Monday to Friday,
 - 10 am – 4 pm Saturdays
 - 12 pm-2 pm Sundays.
- This video in Irish Sign Language and English shows how IRIS works. Please click on the link to watch the video. [IRIS Video](#)

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020

Action 1. Expand ISL remote interpretation service to evenings and weekends.

- Remote interpreter posts approved by CIB and cooperation on promotion and operation of the IRIS interpreting APP.
- IRIS capacity improved to provide evening, Saturday and Sunday appointments, with the following opening hours.
9 am – 8 pm Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm Saturdays and 12pm-2pm Sundays.
- IRIS provided a lifeline to Deaf people during the pandemic (7,159 IRIS uses in 2020).

Action 2: Increase the number of trained Sign Language and Deaf Interpreters

- A position paper based on research on a strategic framework developed.

Action 3. Put a quality-assurance and registration scheme for Interpreters in place

- A registration system was established, with the creation of a separate company trading as Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI). A Registration Panel was appointed by the Department of Social Protection through CIB – and the set of policies and procedures for the operation of the register was finalised. Extensive consultations with stakeholders informed these developments.
- SLIS provides administrative support to RISLI through the Quality Development Officer (QDO).
- RISLI was launched on 23rd December 2020.
- SLIS appointed a Project Officer to support the NDIS actions, and specifically to support the register development in 2020 and the provision of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training.
- SLIS and CIB cooperated extensively to achieve this landmark in time for the commencement of the ISL Act, with significant support and effort from CIB staff.

Action 4. Provide on-going professional training and development for Interpreters.

- Training for Deaf interpreters commissioned from Trinity College Dublin started in 2020.
- Quality supports included non-accredited training workshops attended by 60 Sign language and Deaf interpreters.

Indicators for the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020

Number of requests for the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS)	= 7,159 in 2020
The number of requests for SLIS support services in 2020	= 1,975 requests

Report on NDIS Indicators for SLIS actions in 2020

Indicators for the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2020¹: Indicator 1.4b

The number of requests for the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) and Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) that were facilitated.

2020 Indicators for the National Disability Inclusion Strategy SLIS actions 2020

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------|
| 1. | Number of requests for the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) | = 7,159 |
| 2. | Number of requests for SLIS support services | = 1,975 |

1. Number of requests for the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) = 7,159

There were 7,049 remote interpreted assignments on the mainstream IRIS service in 2020. The remote interpreting APP started on 16 November (2 hours per weekday) and continued in December (4 hours per weekday). The number of interpreted assignments on the remote interpreting APP in 2020 is 110. This brings the total for the year 2020 to 7,159. This corresponds to a 6% decrease on the 7,503 assignments completed on IRIS in 2019.

2. The number of requests for SLIS support services in 2020 = 1,975 requests

- **633 referral requests for an interpreter in 2020** – with 433 or 70% successfully filled.
Total of 633 requests is a 41% decrease on the 1,073 referral requests in 2019
- **307 Access support requests in 2020** – 258 or 84% were successfully resolved.
Total of 307 requests is an 18% decrease on the 373 Access support requests in 2019.
- **1,034 GP/Primary Care Access scheme requests in 2020** – 979 or 95% successfully filled.
Total of 1,034 requests is a 52% increase on the 682 GP/Primary Care Access scheme requests in 2019.

➤ The 2020 total of 1,975 requests is a reduction of 7% on the 2,128 requests in 2019.

¹ National Disability Authority, An Indicator Set To Monitor The National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021

- In 2020, 1,534 requests were successfully completed or filled. This amounts to 78% of the total 1,975 in 2020, which compares to 64% in 2019.

Indictors for the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019

Number of requests for the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) = 7,503 in 2019

The number of requests for SLIS support services in 2019 = 2,128 requests

- 1073 referral requests for an interpreter - includes 36 emergency requests
- 373 Access support requests, includes 12 emergency requests
- 682 GP/Primary Care Access scheme requests, includes 2 emergency requests

To Book an IRIS appointment

- **Web:** <https://iris2.gettimely.com/>
- **Email:** remote@slis.ie
- **Text:** 086 0125900
- **Landline:** 0761 07 8440
- **Skype usernames:** slis.remote, slis.remote2, live:remoteinterpreter

For support in finding an interpreter

- **Email:** bookings@slis.ie
- **Text:** 087 980 6996
- **Landline:** 0761 07 8440
- **Web:** <https://slis.ie/services/#referral-service>

Emergency number: 087 672 5179

For further information or media queries please contact:

John Stewart, SLIS & IRIS Manager, 087 650 6651 Email john.stewart@slis.ie

