

Signs of God information sheet.
Interpreting at a Church wedding service

Information to find out:

Which service?
Which Hymns?
Which Bible readings?
Which Prayers?
Full names of those to be married
Find out who is Deaf? The couple or members of the congregation or both?
Text of Minister's sermon
Text of any poem or songs that will be used
Will there be a rehearsal – are you expected to be at it? (A good idea!)
Are you expected to interpret at the Reception or not? (This may have financial implications depending who is paying for the interpreter)

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))
It is lawful for a Marriage Service in an Anglican Church to be conducted entirely in BSL, so you may be required to interpret BSL to formal "liturgical" English.

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. If you are interpreting into English from BSL your voice must be loud enough for the witnesses to hear.

Be aware of occasions when the Minister is talking intimately, just to the couple, and other times when he/she is addressing the whole congregation.

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.

NB It is likely that the minister will not have used a Sign Language Interpreter before so be ready to do some "cross-cultural" educating! Ministers carry out Weddings as a regular occurrence and often have their own particular ways of working. Attendance at a rehearsal will give both interpreter and minister the chance to work together before the actual event.
You may find it useful to give him/her a *Signs of God* briefing paper.