



Final Report

Introduction to Irish Sign Language (ISL) – Train the Trainer Course

Course Overview

Dates:

- 12–13 September 2025
- 10–11 October 2025
- 14–15 November 2025
- 12–13 December 2025
- 23–24 January 2026

Modules Covered:

- Introduction to ISL Linguistics
- ISL (Advanced)
- Understanding Curriculum
- ISL Teaching Ethics
- Teaching Methods

Times:

- Fridays: 6:30pm – 8:00pm
- Saturdays: 10:00am – 4:00pm

Facilitators:

- Patrick A. Matthews
- Pauline McMahan

Venue:

Tipperary Community Services Centre



Aim of the Course

This course gives participants the basic knowledge and skills needed to teach Irish Sign Language (ISL) at beginner level.

It is suitable for:

- People with some teaching experience in ISL
- People who want to start teaching ISL

Course Outcomes

Overall Experience

- The course ran smoothly with no major issues.
- The venue was comfortable and well managed.
- Heating and facilities supported a good learning environment.

Attendance and Participation

- 15 students started the course and all 15 completed it.
- This is a strong result, as similar courses often have dropouts.
- Attendance was generally good, despite some personal challenges (e.g. illness, bereavement).
- Extra support and flexibility were given where needed.

Learning Environment

- The group had a positive and supportive atmosphere.
- Students worked well together and supported each other.
- Building this network is important, as ISL teachers often work with limited support.

Learner Profile

The group included people from different backgrounds, such as:

- Deaf and hard of hearing participants
- CODAs (Children of Deaf Adults)
- ISL interpreters
- People working with Deaf communities

This variety enriched learning by bringing different perspectives.



Delivery and Workload

- **40 hours of direct teaching** were delivered.
- Additional time was spent on marking ISL assessments (very time-intensive).
- Written and signed feedback was provided.
- Group and one-to-one tutorials were offered.
- Digital learning materials were developed due to the shortage of ISL resources.

Summary of Modules

1. ISL Advanced

- Focused on improving signing skills.
- Emphasised the importance of clear and accurate signing.
- Highlighted the responsibility of teachers, especially in home tutoring settings.

2. ISL Linguistics

- Explained how ISL works as a language.
- Covered key features (such as sign formation and structure).
- Helped learners understand how to correct mistakes and explain them clearly.

3. Understanding Curriculum

- Explained what a curriculum is and how to use it in teaching.
- Helped students understand existing ISL curricula.
- Prepared students to:
 - Deliver a set curriculum
 - Create simple teaching plans when needed

4. Teaching Methods

- Introduced different ways of teaching.
- Focused on adapting teaching to different learning styles.
- Emphasised teaching through visual methods rather than spoken English.
- Encouraged flexibility and creativity in teaching.



5. ISL Teaching Ethics

- Covered professional behaviour and responsibilities.
- Explained how to deal with challenges in teaching situations.
- Introduced the ISL Code of Professional Practice.

Key Strengths of the Course

- Strong student retention (no dropouts)
- Supportive and collaborative learning environment
- Diverse group of learners
- High level of engagement and commitment
- Flexible support for students facing personal challenges
- Development of new ISL teaching resources

Conclusion

This course successfully prepared participants to begin teaching ISL at a basic level.

Participants gained:

- Improved ISL skills
- Understanding of how to teach effectively
- Knowledge of curriculum and ethics
- Confidence to begin teaching

The course also helped build a support network among future ISL teachers, which is essential in this field.