

## **Irish Language Policy**

### **Language Profile of the Derry City & Strabane Council Area**

The Derry City and Strabane District Council area is home to a diverse range of languages including English – the majority language; Irish and Ulster-Scots – our regional minority indigenous languages; minority ethnic languages such as Polish and Mandarin, and British and Irish sign languages.

### **Demographics**

In the Derry City and Strabane District Council area 13.92% (19,704) of the population has knowledge of Irish and 5.13% (7,266) of the population has knowledge of Ulster-Scots.

Research carried out in 2018 into the most widely spoken minority ethnic languages in schools identified the following languages in the top 5: Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian and Malayalam (one of 22 languages spoken in India).

Both British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) were embraced within the Good Friday Agreement and both were recognised as languages in their own right in 2004. BSL is used by 3,500 members of the deaf population of Northern Ireland while approximately 1,500 use ISL but there is a language specific to Northern Ireland known as Northern Ireland Sign Language (NISL) which combines ISL syntax (structure) with the BSL lexicon (vocabulary).

### **Irish Language Policy**

This policy sets out Council's commitments to facilitate and encourage the use and promotion of the Irish language in public life. It also sets out the specific legislative obligations placed on local government service providers under a key piece of legislation called the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages which includes specific duties for Councils in respect of the Irish language.

The objectives of the policy are:

- To comply with relevant legislative obligations;
- To encourage the use of Irish in public life;
- To improve access to Council services and information in the Irish language;
- To produce information in Irish and handle requests for translation and interpretation;
- To incorporate the Irish language into the Council's corporate identity;

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- To liaise with the Irish language media across a range of platforms;
- To encourage the use of Irish at civic events and festivals;
- To enhance the public visibility of the Irish language i.e. on signage;
- To facilitate the Irish language community to access grant aid opportunities.

### What the policy means in practical terms?

- **We respect the right of members of the public and employees to speak Irish within the workplace and to use their names and addresses in Irish;**
- **We incorporate the Irish language into our brand and logo;**
- **We reply in Irish to all correspondence received in Irish.**
- **We endeavour to provide as many services and as much information as possible in the Irish language both through our Irish Language Officer and through other suitably skilled staff;**
- **We offer a dedicated Irish language telephone service for members of the public to make direct access with the Irish Language Officer;**
- **We provide training for all staff, especially frontline staff, so that everyone understands the policy deals with all customers in a way that respects their language needs and cultural sensitivities;**
- **We provide translation, interpretation, proof-reading and quality-assurance services to departments, and in cases of larger projects we signpost staff to our select list of translators and interpreters;**
- **We make sure that information produced in Irish is done so to the same quality and presentational standard as the English;**
- **We provide a range of forms and applications in Irish and seek ways to provide additional service improvements on an ongoing basis;**
- **We undertake media engagement and promotional and publicity activities in Irish;**
- **We encourage the use of Irish at festivals, events, formal occasions and public meetings and we will provide Simultaneous Translation upon request;**
- **We provide Irish language versions of street and road names where community consensus exists;**
- **We include Irish on Council signage and are currently working to find out how best to incorporate language into our branding and signage going forward;**
- **We encourage applications to our Grant Aid schemes for Irish language initiatives and run a range of our own projects and partnership initiatives to support the promotion and development of the Irish language in the area.**