



FIRST FOR BSL

Information on Fees and Funding for BSL and Interpreting Courses

We understand that learning British Sign Language can be a huge financial commitment. We have produced this information pack to help you explore options of how to fund a BSL or interpreting course.

The total cost of learning BSL from Level 1 to Level 6 currently stands at £4,000. This is in addition to £6,000 for further training to become a professional sign language interpreter or sign language translator.

Unfortunately, these days there is very little government help available for BSL courses. Some Further Education colleges are able to access government funding and so they are able to subsidise the cost of BSL courses and charge lower fees. However, these courses are rarely free and often FE colleges are only able to subsidise the cost of Level 1 BSL courses.

BSL First is a private training provider and so we are not eligible for government funding. This means that we have to run our business solely based on the income we generate from course fees. Although the cost of learning BSL is high, there are options available to help you with managing these costs.

Private funding

The majority of students pay for the cost of BSL courses with their own private funds. This may be personal savings or setting some money aside every month to go towards the cost of the course.

We offer the option to pay the course fees over a number of monthly instalments to help you with managing your finances. The monthly payments are collected by Direct Debit, so it will come straight out of your bank account on a date that you have specified. For example, for the Level 1 BSL course, you may wish to pay £100 per month over 4 months on the 20th of the month.

Interest free credit

Some students prefer to pay the course fee in full on a credit card and then pay back the credit card on their own terms. You may prefer to do this if the standard monthly instalments payments do not work for you (e.g. you want to pay less back over a longer period of time).

This option tends to be popular with the advanced level BSL courses, where the monthly instalment payments are higher. For example, the Level 6 BSL course starts with payments of £250 per month going down to £100 per month over 8 months.

The credit card market is always changing with new interest free credit cards coming on to the market every day. We recommend looking at Money Saving Expert for the best interest free credit card deals at the moment: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/credit-cards/best-0-credit-cards/>

Employer funding

If you are employed and you need to learn BSL for your job then your employer may pay the course fee for you. Depending on your employer, you may also have access to a training budget for professional development.

Concessions and discounts

Due to the lack of funding available for hearing parents of deaf children and for hearing children of deaf parents, we offer a 10% concession. This concession is only available for the Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 BSL courses and cannot be used in conjunction with the continuing students discount.

For students who would like to learn BSL with the intention of pursuing a career in sign language interpreting or sign language translation, we offer a 10% discount to continuing students who are progressing to the next level within 1 year completing the previous level. For example, if you have completed the Level 1 BSL course, then you will get a 10% discount on the Level 2 BSL course so long as you start the Level 2 BSL course within 1 year of finishing the Level 1 BSL course. The continuing students discount will save you £360 on your total course fees from Level 1 to Level 6.

Charitable grants

Some charities offer grants to hearing parents of deaf children to help with the cost of learning BSL. However, these grants are very competitive.

Birkdale Trust for Hearing Impaired: <http://www.grantsforthe deaf.co.uk/>

National Deaf Children's Society: http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/index.html

Professional interpreter and translator training

There is no funding available for professional qualifications in sign language interpreting and in sign language translation. This is because these are professional qualifications that will enable you to start working as a professional sign language interpreter or sign language translator.

Trainee sign language interpreters have a starting salary of around £27,000 per annum. Freelance rates for trainee interpreters start at around £200 per day and around £45,000 per annum (gross). Qualified sign language interpreters have a starting salary of around £30,000 per annum. Freelance rates for qualified interpreters start at £250 per day and around £56,000 per year (gross).

As a result, you will be able to recuperate the initial cost of your interpreter training qualification within a few months of starting work. To cover the initial cost, you may wish to fund this privately by paying the course fee over monthly instalments, or by taking out interest free credit.

Communication Support Worker training

Funding for CSW training works on a similar basis to professional qualifications in sign language interpreting and sign language translation. It is assumed that you will be able to recuperate the initial cost of your CSW qualification within a few months of starting work as a professional CSW.

Starting salaries for CSWs in FE colleges are around £22,000 per annum (full time). To cover the initial cost of your CSW qualification, you may wish to fund this privately by paying the course fee over monthly instalments, or by taking out interest free credit. If you are already working as a CSW then your employer may be able to providing funding for you to complete this qualification.

IDP-HS course

As the IDP-HS course is a professional course that leads to qualified interpreter status, there is no funding available for this course. However, the £6,000 total course fee takes you from Level 2 BSL to RSLI status. This would normally cost £9,000 and so students on this course are already saving £3,000 on their BSL and interpreter training.

You will be able to recuperate the initial cost of your interpreter training qualification within a few months of starting work. To cover the initial cost, you may wish to fund this privately by paying the course fee over monthly instalments, or by taking out interest free credit.