RBSLI Statement on Remote Interpreting During Covid19

RBSLI understands that many BSL/English Interpreters now find themselves in a new and rapidly changing landscape. Many, who have not previously undertaken remote working through one of the established VRI companies, find themselves having to learn new skills in VRI technology and interpreting on a new platform.

RBSLI knows that many interpreters are now working from home and have questions regarding technology, IT security, and how these, in turn, work with the RBSLI Code of Ethics. It is important to stress that these guidelines are for RBSLI registrants who now find themselves remotely working, they do not supersede or replace policies or guidelines issued by VRI agencies for those remote interpreters who already undertake this work on a regular basis.

First and foremost, the code of ethics remains unchanged in these trying times, we expect registrants to maintain the standards they signed up to upon registration *to the best of their ability.* This phrase becomes even more important during this time as interpreters switch to a multitude of platforms and, no doubt, encounter technical issues as well as linguistic ones. Ensuring discourse between the interlocutors remains clear and cohesive, whilst accurately reflecting the core meaning and intent, is inherently problematic over remote platforms where there is an increased error rate (Braun and Taylor, 2011). This often requires much more overt and explicit interaction management than the interpreter is used to. Indeed, a more overt presentation of self (Goffman, 1990) is almost de rigueur for this mode of working.

Registrants are not expected to become technical experts overnight and RBSLI recommends that decisions about the remote platform be left to the clients. The interpreter can only be responsible for their end of the interaction and to this end RBSLI recommends the following;

1. Ensure your computer is password protected,
2. Ensure, wherever practicable, that you have picked a workspace where you can maintain client confidentiality and won't be interrupted, ideally this should be away from other family members and pets if possible,
3. If you have client data on your computer, as a result of sharing files for translation tasks for example, ensure that these are secure and that you lock your computer when you leave it alone,
4. Ensure you have adequate virus protection,
5. Update any relevant programs and your operating system to prevent security breaches,
6. Wherever possible use an ethernet cable to connect your equipment to the router. This usually results in better bandwidth and reduces the risk of using unsecured WiFi,
7. If the above is not possible then check your WiFi router is secured. This may mean changing the default settings and ensuring stronger passwords,
8. Don't share the links to the remote meetings anywhere,
9. Consider undertaking CPD aimed at becoming more confident with remote interpreting, such as that provided by VLP.

If you have followed these recommendations and are using the client's choice of platform then you would be unlikely to fall foul of breaching the code of ethics regarding ensuring least harm. Some clients may wish to record the proceedings, but it is up to the individual interpreter to agree this with the client. Please note that it is not expected that the interpreter would need to record the interaction, and doing so without explicit consent from the client, and any other interlocutors involved, would be classed as harm within the scope of the code.