

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar



British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024 - 2030

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BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) PLAN 2024 – 2030

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1. Introduction

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies to publish BSL plans from October 2018. The first National Plan 2017 - 2023 was published on 24 October 2017 following extensive engagement with D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users (D – people born deaf, d – those who become deaf.)

As required by BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, the first BSL Plan for this Local Authority set out actions the Comhairle took over the period of 2018 – 2024 and the progress was reviewed on a regular basis.

Key achievements include:

- BSL services and technology are available to BSL users to access information and services.
- Comhairle web content is checked to ensure that it is accessible.
- A link to BSL online interpreting service '[contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)' is provided on the Comhairle's ~~contact~~ web pages, including the '[Contact Us](#)' web page.
- A Teacher of the Deaf (TOD) supports children and families from birth to 18 years old and will continue to develop a plan to take forward Education Scotland advice and guidance for teachers and schools.
- Local employability services take a person-centred approach to participant support needs.

This BSL Plan sets out actions the Comhairle will take over the period 2024 – 2030 and includes actions from the previous plan where more work was required.

Throughout the plan, we refer to 'BSL users', which covers all people whose first or preferred language is BSL, including those who receive

the language in a tactile form due to sight loss. BSL is a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

The plan is framed around similar long-term goals identified in the national plan which has been co-produced with BSL users across Scotland. The Comhairle is committed to improving access to services for those using the language and raising awareness of BSL.

The Comhairle involved BSL users and those who represent them to ensure that the consultation on the draft plan was accessible to D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users. This plan is published in BSL and English.

According to the latest census in 2011, there were 36 people using BSL at home across the islands.

2.Summary of the plan

This BSL Plan outlines the actions the Comhairle will undertake to aim to improve the ways in which BSL users find out about our services and ensure equality of access to these services.

The plan will form part of the wider corporate Sensory Strategy and include elements of partnership working with other local service providers and support services.

Some of the key actions the plan outlines are to:

- a) Promote the availability of accessible BSL interpreting services locally.
- b) Improve access to information and services for BSL users.
- c) Support staff and offer learning opportunities to raise awareness of BSL.
- d) Improve BSL awareness among care staff and signposting to health and social care information available in BSL.

3. BSL 2024-2030 ACTION PLAN

3.1 BSL Data

It is the intention of the Scottish Government to strengthen their evidence on BSL users in Scotland to realise their ambition for BSL.



We share the long-term goal set out by the Scottish Government, which is:

“To strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community in Scotland to better inform decision making in public policy and service design.”

Our Actions – By 2030, we will:

- a) Monitor progress of the Scottish Government’s development of a BSL Data Strategy and assess whether it is feasible to implement it or a similar strategy for the Western Isles.

- b) Monitor and update the existing information about BSL users in our organisation and community to support accessibility to our services for BSL users.

3.2 Access to Employment



No One Left Behind is the Scottish Government all-age approach to employability support in Scotland.

We share the long-term goal for access to employment set out in the BSL National Plan, which

is:

“BSL users will receive person-centred support to develop their skills, consider what route to employment is right for them and enter into the workforce so that they can fulfil their potential, and improve Scotland’s economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career.”

Our Actions – By 2030, we will:

- a) Continue to signpost pupils and students to a range of information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process.
- b) Monitor and update the existing information about BSL users in our organisation and community to support accessibility to our services for BSL users.

3.3 Children, Young People and their Families



The priority area set out in the BSL National Plan is:

“Support for deaf children, young people and their families - The Scottish Government recognises that language deprivation in deaf and deafblind children has an impact on their crucial developmental learning in the ages between 0-5 years which can hinder their social, cognitive, and emotional development.”

We share the resulting long-term goal of the Scottish Government, which is:

“The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a deaf or deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL. We will strengthen partnerships between relevant organisations to overcome barriers for BSL users and deaf/deafblind children to ensure they have the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential.”

Our Actions – By 2030, we will:

- a) Continue to work with early years staff to ensure that information about BSL and Deaf culture and the resources that are available in BSL, are made available where necessary to meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or Deafblind child.
- b) Support early access to BSL for deaf and deafblind children, young people and their families by promoting Early Years

resources such as the BSL content for the Bookbug App.

- c) Investigate opportunities for early years workers to learn BSL up to the level of SCQF Level 3 to inform our future work in this area.

3.4 School Education

From the 2018-2024 BSL plan, we want to continue to improve in this area and we are taking forward the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:



“Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child’s education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school”

Our Actions – By 2030, we will:

- a) Continue to take forward advice developed by Education Scotland to improve the way that teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and to ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can get further involved in their child’s education.

3.5 Health and Wellbeing

We share the long-term goal for health and wellbeing set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:



“BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives, and make informed choices at every stage of their lives.”

Our Actions – By 2030, we will:

- a) Develop and implement a Sensory Strategy with partners.
- b) Improve access to the Comhairle’s BSL pages and translation services through increased signposting on web pages.
- c) Continue to signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL.
- d) Continue to take steps to improve access to information about sport, and to local sports facilities and sporting opportunities.
- e) Liaise with Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland and seek advice on meeting BSL training standards among Care Staff, based on local needs.

3.6 BSL Accessibility



We share the long-term goal set out by the Scottish Government to ***“remove accessibility as a barrier for BSL users in all aspects of life, recognising the importance of having accessible information in the right format at the right time, utilising technology and increasing people’s awareness of communication tools.”***

Our Actions – By 2030, we will:

- a) Develop an accessibility training course for the Comhairle’s in-house training program, LearnPro, to support accessibility standards of the Comhairle’s website.
- b) Support the uptake of SignPort, an online portal for BSL/English interpreter bookings, within the Scottish Government and public bodies once it has been launched for public use.

3.7 Celebrating BSL Culture



We share the long-term goal for culture and the arts set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland.”

Our Actions – By 2030, we will:

- a) Work with local arts centres to identify demand for BSL within culture and the arts locally.
- b) Continue to support BSL users to take part in authority-led cultural events as participants, audience members and professionals.

4. Delivering this plan

4.1 Monitoring and Review

The actions within this plan will be incorporated into service business plans and will be monitored and reported accordingly.

It is planned to review and report on progress annually, at minimum every three years.

The BSL plan will be reviewed every six years. Future plans will be shaped by national initiatives and the priorities of local BSL users.

4.2 Have your say

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is committed to improving our services and it is important that we listen to what you, the community, say. We welcome your comments or suggestions for improvements on the BSL Plan 2024-2030 for the Comhairle to consider at any time of the year, so please let us know using any of the contact details listed.

Contact Details

- British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us directly by using contactSCOTLAND-BSL: <https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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