



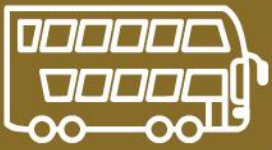
Clackmannanshire
Council

www.clacks.gov.uk

Comhairle Siorrachd
Chlach Mhanann



British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2026-2032



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Introduction and background

The Scottish Government has stated its commitment to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users¹ to live, work and visit, and has set out how it aims to achieve this in the British Sign Language National Plan 2023-2029, which was published in November 2023. The Plan focuses on ten priority themes developed to respond to the barriers identified by BSL users as important to them.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires a range of Scottish public bodies, including local authorities, health boards, colleges, and universities, to publish plans showing how they will support BSL users and promote the use of BSL locally.

Of the ten national priorities, we have identified seven which are most relevant to Clackmannanshire Council, and on which we will focus over the next 6 years. In setting out the actions under those long-term goals that Clackmannanshire Council will take over the period 2026 – 2032, this plan fulfils that requirement.

To refresh our Plan, we consulted with local BSL users and their representatives to find out more about the barriers they face when accessing our services and how best we can remove them.

In the development of this Plan, we worked closely with BDA who provided their knowledge and advice and connected us directly with some of Clackmannanshire's BSL users.

BSL in Clackmannanshire

BSL is recognised as a language, with its own grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, distinct from spoken or written English. Whilst it is possible for d/Deaf² and deafblind BSL users to read and write English, we acknowledge that a sizeable proportion of the community find this very difficult, especially when more complex concepts, grammar or less common words are used.

Reliable data on the use of BSL as a first language specifically in Clackmannanshire is limited. The 2022 Census shows that people whose first language is BSL make up just under 0.05% of Clackmannanshire's population aged 3 years or over. Census results also show that just under 2.4% of our population aged over 3 years are BSL users. Across Scotland the percentage of BSL users is just over 2.2% of the population. However, the organisations supporting and advocating on behalf of BSL users have reason to believe that the wording of the Census question may have generated a higher number of responses to the question about first language BSL than the reality, and figures for Clackmannanshire may in fact be slightly lower than given.

There is no local Deaf Group although the Forth Valley Sensory Centre Deaf Club is open to Clackmannanshire's BSL users. Classes in conversational BSL are available locally.

We often provide services to BSL users often without the need for the use of BSL as many transactions with the public succeed with little or no oral communication required. However, we cannot assume that there are no barriers to accessing services or that there is external support to help overcome them.

This plan sets out our approach to mainstreaming BSL in Council functions. Making best use of the resources and expertise available to us, we are taking a phased approach focusing on what can be realistically achieved to make a difference within the lifespan of the Plan.

¹ Throughout this plan "BSL users" includes all people whose first or preferred language is BSL, including those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss.

² A capital D denotes deafness from birth. A small d denotes acquired deafness.

Summary of Progress since 2018

In the time since our first BSL Plan came into operation, we have installed arrangements for translation and interpretation and updated our website linking to our BSL plan from our Equality and Diversity webpage.

We have mainstreamed our commitment to BSL which is embedded in our Mainstreaming Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Outcomes 2024-2029. This integration into our strategic planning acknowledges that BSL is not an additional function with its own dedicated resources and objectives, but an improvement to existing functions.

We have made progress in raising awareness of BSL culture amongst our Early Years workforce and in providing learning opportunities to raise capacity so that we are able to provide relevant information to children and families at the point of diagnosis.

As with most interactions with the public, our frontline staff have worked flexibly with BSL users who access our Services regularly and adopted the preferred method of communication of the person in question.

We are collaborating across the Forth Valley area and have well-established links with Windsor Park School and Forth Valley Sensory Service.

We have adopted British Sign Language (BSL) as a language as part of '1 plus 2 languages' in selected schools.

We have made personal contact with some of our BSL users and made interim arrangements for ongoing contact.

Name and contact details of lead officer

Cherie Jarvie
Strategy & Performance Manager
E-mail equalities@clacks.gov.uk

Engagement and Consultation

We promoted engagement on the plan through our website and social media. We also shared our messages and draft actions with local and national partner organisations, including community councils, Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface, Forth Valley Sensory Centre, the Health & Social Care Alliance, and the British Deaf Association.

We gathered views in different ways:

- An online survey in February 2026
- A public drop-in at Kilncraigs, Alloa in March 2026
- A meeting with Clackmannanshire members of Falkirk Deaf Club at their premises

What you told us

We received feedback from individuals who are BSL users and their families, as well as people with a professional interest in BSL.

Alongside positive comments about how accessible Council services already are for BSL users we received constructive suggestions on further steps we could take to improve the experience for BSL users.

Key messages

- We should not presume that BSL users will find information on our website or that interaction with us through digital means is a preferred alternative. Written information should be in Plain English and BSL videos as an alternative to written information are appreciated.
- BSL awareness training should be mandatory at least for staff in some services and, although online interpretation is available, there needs to be more people who could provide interpretation in person.
- The BSL community welcomes the inclusion of BSL in the school curriculum, placing less value on Makaton, and there is interest in BSL classes in the area for local people.
- There needs to be more work with employers to support reasonable adjustments for communication with potential BSL employees.
- Further awareness-raising for staff in health and social care is critical in ensuring children who are born deaf are not missed and to ensure adequate mental health provision for people for whom sensory loss has been traumatising.
- The scope that culture offers for non-verbal expression and in enriching the lives of Deaf/deafblind people should be further exploited.
- BSL users are seldom faced with barriers they cannot work around when accessing Council Services and they feel supported in matters relating to the Council.
- There is local interest amongst Council staff and the public for conversational BSL classes.

Summary - Clackmannanshire Council's BSL Plan

This plan shows our commitment to meeting the needs of Clackmannanshire's BSL users and contributing to the aspirations set out in the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan.

We will build on the work undertaken since the first Plan was put in place, continuing to raise staff awareness and understanding of Clackmannanshire's BSL needs.

As well as what is visible to the public, much of the improvement in communication and access to services for Clackmannanshire's BSL users involves improvements to internal systems, service delivery planning, and corporate training.

Key Action Areas

- Improving the location and format of information for BSL users about Council services.
- Ongoing staff training and awareness-raising.
- Signposting to support and the services of other organisations most used by BSL users.
- Exploring partnership working to maximise resources and prevent gaps in services for BSL users.
- Exploiting dedicated resources available from the Scottish Government, and other public agencies.

Please note, whenever we refer to 'BSL users' we mean Deaf and /or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL).

CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL BSL PLAN



Priority Actions

1. BSL Accessibility

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

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.

By 2032, we will:

- 1.1. Make it easier for BSL users to find the information that relates to them on our website by creating a dedicated 'BSL page.'
- 1.2. Demonstrate recognition of the needs of BSL users at all stages of BSL learning by raising awareness among frontline staff of the range of communication support available.
- 1.3. Collaborate with community planning partners and other relevant third sector support organisations, to streamline strategic BSL planning and delivery where appropriate.
- 1.4. Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service '[contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)' and the '999 BSL Service', to staff and to local BSL users³.
- 1.5. Train frontline staff who come into contact with BSL users in BSL or BSL awareness training, as appropriate.
- 1.6. Review and maintain up-to-date arrangements for accessing interpretation, translation services, and other support with communication.

2. Children, Young People, and their Families



We share the long-term goal set out in the BSL National Plan, 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.

By 2032, we will:

- 2.1. Implement pathways to information and practical support that respond appropriately to the needs of children, young people, and their families at the right time.

³ These are free services that enable BSL users to communicate, in real-time, with public and emergency services via a video link with a BSL/English interpreter.

- 2.2. Respond to the needs of early years staff for information about BSL and Deaf culture, resources that are available in BSL and tools, such as [Education Scotland's BSL Toolkit for Practitioners](#), that help them engage effectively with families with a BSL user.
- 2.3. Continue to offer information on additional support for children with hearing loss to make it easier for parents to access the support they need for their child.

3. Access to Employment



We share the long-term goal 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 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.

By 2032, we will:

- 3.1. Signpost pupils and students to a wide range of nationally available information, advice, and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process.
- 3.2. Continue to work with partners and organisations who deliver employability support and services (both in-house and externally commissioned support), and with employers and business support organisations, to ensure the needs of BSL users are accommodated in routes to employment.
- 3.3. Continue to raise awareness with BSL users locally of the support available under national programmes such as the UK Government's [Access to Work](#) (AtW) and [No One Left Behind](#).

4. Health and Wellbeing



We share the long-term goal 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 to make informed choices at every stage of their lives.

By 2032, we will:

- 4.1. Recognising the reliance of BSL users of all ages on services such as newborn hearing screening, audiology, education support, speech and language therapy, and support for transitions throughout life, we will direct BSL users to appropriate accessible information through the communication channels of relevant Services and organisations, and ensure we provide accessible social care services to BSL users
- 4.2. Ensure that local work to tackle mental ill health and social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users.

5. Celebrating BSL Culture



We share the long-term goal 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.

By 2032, we will:

- 5.1. Build links with the existing expertise in the various organisations that can help us improve access to and integration with culture and the arts locally for BSL users.

6. BSL Data

We share the long-term goal set out in the BSL National Plan, 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

By 2032, we will:

- 6.1. Build our Client Record System to include a 'BSL flag' to enable us to tailor services to the needs of BSL users who need our services.
- 6.2. Build working relationships with organisations and within networks which will help improve our understanding of the needs of our BSL users with regard to how we deliver our services inclusively in communities.

7. Democratic Participation



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

BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Scotland, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies

By 2032, we will:

- 7.1. Continue to work with the Electoral Registration Office, and local support organisations, to maximise use of resources which support BSL users to participate in democratic and public life, including providing the necessary adaptations during elections.
- 7.2. Circulate information on democratic participation to relevant groups, promoting the Access to Elected Office Fund locally, which can meet the additional costs of BSL users wishing to stand for selection or election in local or Scottish Parliament elections.