
Report to Clackmannanshire Council

Date of Meeting: 25th October 2018

Subject: British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for Clackmannanshire 2018-2024

Report by: Strategic Director, Partnership and Performance

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present for approval the Council's first British Sign Language (BSL) Plan. The plan has been developed over the past 5 months, in line with statutory guidance published by Scottish Government, and the Scottish Government's National British Sign Language Plan 2017-2023. British Sign Language Plans are required to be agreed and published by 31st October 2018.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Council;
- a) Note, challenge and comment on the report and attached plan;
 - b) Agree the British Sign Language Plan for Clackmannanshire, following which it will be submitted to the Scottish Government and published on our website in both English and BSL.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1. The [BSL \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires the Scottish Government and other public bodies, including local authorities, regional NHS boards, colleges and universities, to publish plans setting out how they will promote and support BSL.
- 3.2. BSL is recognised as a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary, distinct from spoken or written English. Whilst most deaf BSL users can read and write English to a level, they may have great difficulty, especially when more complex concepts, grammar or less common words are used.

- 3.3. The Scottish Government published its [first BSL National Plan](#) in October 2017. It is framed under ten long-term goals which were co-produced with BSL users across Scotland, and includes 70 actions to be taken by the Scottish Government by 2020, around 30 of which apply also to local authorities.
- 3.4. Clackmannanshire Council, in line with other public bodies, is required to publish its first “authority plan” by October 2018. This needs to be consistent with the national plan, setting out the actions, with related timescales, we will undertake to promote and facilitate the use of BSL in our work. The Scottish Government has provided funding of £11k to each local authority to support this work and to cover the cost of translating both the draft and approved plans into BSL (the BSL version of the draft plan is [available online](#)).
- 3.5. In developing our plan, we were required to consult BSL users and their representatives. Consultation meetings were held in Clackmannanshire and at the Sensory Centre, Camelon (in partnership with NHS Forth Valley). In addition, an online survey ran during September, and feedback has also been received through social media. Feedback and suggestions, has been received through engagement on developing the plan and have shaped the development of the final plan for Clackmannanshire. There has also been significant amount of interest from non-BSL users in learning the language, at least to a basic level.
- 3.6. The plan sets out the key action areas for progression in Clackmannanshire. These are:
- Improving our links with, and understanding of, BSL users locally and the issues they face when accessing services
 - Signposting services and support for BSL users
 - Promoting learning resources for those who would like to learn BSL, or improve their skill level
 - Improving information for BSL users and staff, so that both know what to do to when communicating with each other
 - Working with partner organisations to ensure services and support for BSL users are joined-up and seamless
 - Responding positively to BSL initiatives coming from the Scottish Government, and other organisations
- 3.7. A national progress report is to be published in 2020. This will include progress made by the Scottish Government and by public authorities, together with examples of best practice and any poor performance. Going forward, BSL plans will be produced on a 6 year cycle, with national progress reports published mid-cycle.

4.0 Sustainability Implications

- 4.1. Actions arising from the BSL plan could contribute towards improving the quality of deaf people in Clackmannanshire by facilitating routes into & training and unemployment, reducing social exclusion and health inequalities, and encouraging participation in decision making.

5.0 Resource Implications

5.1. Financial Details

- 5.2. The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. Yes

- 5.3. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

5.4. Staffing

There are no implications for staffing arising from this report.

6.0 Exempt Reports

- 6.1. Is this report exempt? Yes (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

- (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box)

Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all

Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life

Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential

Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

- (2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes No

9.0 Legality

9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

10.0 Appendices

Clackmannanshire Council draft BSL Plan 2018-24.

11.0 Background Papers

11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes (please list the documents below) No

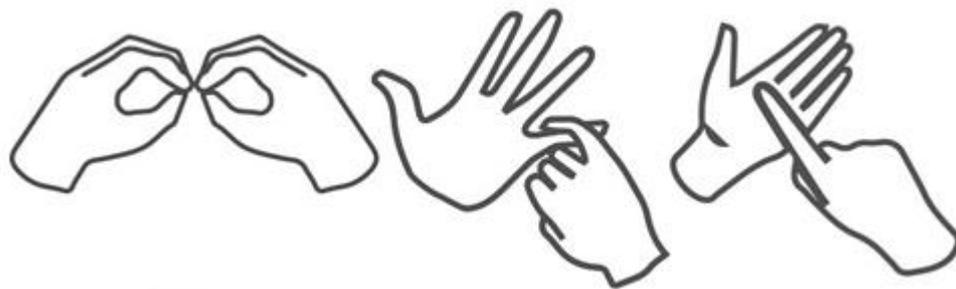
British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023

Author(s)

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Approved by

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Clackmannanshire Council

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

2018-2024

A BSL version of this plan is available at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYsYiplr_vHP0M3XvnJ7w1w

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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 BSL National Plan, which was published in October 2017. The plan is framed under ten long-term goals which were co-produced with BSL users across Scotland.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires a range of Scottish public bodies, including local authorities, health boards, colleges and universities, to also publish plans showing how they will support BSL users and promote the use of BSL. This plan sets out the actions Clackmannanshire Council will take over the period 2018 – 2024 and is framed under those long term goals in the national plan that apply to local authorities.

While developing our plan, we have consulted with BSL users and their representatives locally, as well as others who have expressed an interest in helping to develop our BSL plan. There are no local groups specific to the BSL or D/deaf and deafblind² communities in Clackmannanshire, although the Forth Valley Sensory Centre and the Forth Valley Deaf Children's Society (FVDCS) do include Clackmannanshire in their coverage. We are committed to continuing that engagement as we implement the actions in our plan and review our progress.

We will contribute to the national progress report in 2020 and a further 6 year plan will be published in 2024.

BSL in Clackmannanshire

Data on the use of BSL and deafness in Clackmannanshire is limited. 2011 census data indicates that there are 129 people in Clackmannanshire who use BSL at home, and of these, 27 are deaf or have partial hearing loss. Meanwhile deafscotland (previously the Scottish Council on Deafness) estimate that there are 3,477 people with some level of hearing loss in the county. However, we have had little contact with local D/deaf and deafblind BSL users. It may be that they manage without having to contact Council services, or that they use alternative ways to communicate with us, but it could also mean that some people struggle to find the support that they need.

BSL is recognised as a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary, distinct from spoken or written English. Whilst most D/deaf and deafblind BSL users can read and write English, they may find this very difficult, especially when more complex concepts, grammar or less common words are used.

This plan sets out how we will improve communication and access to services for D/deaf and deafblind BSL users living, working and visiting Clackmannanshire.

Name and contact details of lead officer

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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 people who have been deaf from birth, while a small d is used to refer to people who become deaf.

Engagement and Consultation

We promoted engagement on the plan through our website, the local newspaper and social media. We also used BSL videos and shared our messages with local and national partner organisations, including community councils, Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface, the Sensory Centre in Camelon and the British Deaf Association.

We gathered views in different ways:

- Public meetings in the Speirs Centre, Alloa during August and September 2018
- An online survey
- Comments by email

What you told us

We received feedback from D/deaf BSL users and their families, as well as other people, some of whom have learned BSL to a level, and others who have an interest in the language. The comments we received were overwhelmingly positive and a significant number of hearing people said they would like to learn BSL.

Key messages

- There is a general lack of understanding around deafness and BSL. It is often assumed, incorrectly, that D/deaf people should be able to easily communicate through written English
- It can be very difficult for a D/deaf BSL to find the information they need on websites because it is usually only presented in English
- Customer service staff in many organisations do not know what to do when a D/deaf person makes an enquiry
- Families with D/deaf children said that courses in BSL were expensive and often involved long journey times to take part
- There is a lot of misunderstanding about the value of BSL to D/deaf people. In particular, there is often an assumption that cochlear implants negate the need for a visual language, but it is important distinguish what is essentially a medical intervention from the social and cultural benefits offered by BSL
- There is significant local demand for learning at least some BSL

Summary - Clackmannanshire Council's BSL Plan

Our plan shows how we will improve communication and access to services for D/deaf and deafblind BSL users, and promote the use of BSL. It is structured under the same long-term goals as the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan, apart from those relating to Post-school education, Justice and Transport, which are outwith the scope of local authorities. However, some of our local actions, particularly around making it easier for BSL users to access information and services, as well as developing staff awareness and skills, will contribute to the achievement of all of the national goals.

Key action areas include:

- Improving our links with, and understanding of, BSL users locally and the issues they face when accessing services
- Signposting services and support for BSL users
- Promoting learning resources for those who would like to learn BSL, or improve their skill level
- Improving information for BSL users and staff, so that both know what to do to when communicating with each other
- Working with partner organisations to ensure services and support for BSL users are joined-up and seamless
- Responding positively to BSL initiatives coming from the Scottish Government, and other organisations

CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL BSL PLAN

1. Across all our services



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

Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users.

By 2024, we will:

- 1.1. Analyse existing evidence we have about BSL users and identify and fill key information gaps, so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress
- 1.2. Establish links with the BSL community locally and engage directly with them so that we can better understand what needs to improve
- 1.3. Review our website to make it easier for BSL users, and other people with sensory impairments, to find the information they need
- 1.4. Work with partner organisations, including the third sector, to improve services for BSL users and to promote BSL in the community
- 1.5. Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL', to staff and to local BSL users. This is a free service that enables BSL users to communicate, in real-time, with public services via a video link with a BSL/English interpreter
- 1.6. Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training
- 1.7. Review arrangements for accessing interpretation and translation services
- 1.8. Respond positively to Scottish Government initiatives emerging from the national BSL Plan

2. Family support, Early Learning and Childcare



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 D/deaf or deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL.

By 2024, we will:

- 2.1. Provide early years staff with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and about resources that are available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or deafblind child

3. School Education



We share the long-term goal 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.

By 2024, we will:

- 3.1. Contribute to the Scottish Government's investigation of the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff working with D/deaf and deafblind pupils in schools, and take account of any new guidance for teachers or support staff working with pupils who use BSL
- 3.2. Take forward advice developed by Education Scotland to a) improve the way that teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and b) ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can get further involved in their child's education
- 3.3. Contribute to the SCILT (Scotland's National Centre for Languages) programme of work to support the learning of BSL in schools for hearing pupils as part of the 1+2 programme, including sharing best practice and guidance
- 3.4. Review the information we offer on additional support for hearing impaired children to make it easier for parents to access the support they need for their child

4. Training, Work and Social Security



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

BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish 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 2024, we will:

- 4.1. Signpost pupils and students to a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process
- 4.2. Work with partners who deliver employment services, and with employer groups already supporting employability to help signpost them to specific advice on the needs of BSL users
- 4.3. Raise awareness locally of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme with employers and with BSL users (including those on Modern Apprenticeships) so that they can benefit from the support it provides
- 4.4. Ensure we will have transition plans for BSL users in place

5. Health (including Social Care), Mental 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 2024, we will:

- 5.1. Signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL (to be produced by NHS Health Scotland and NHS24), and b) develop complementary information in BSL about local provision, as appropriate
- 5.2. Through integration boards, ensure that psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users
- 5.3. Take steps to improve access to information about sport, and to local sports facilities and sporting opportunities
- 5.4. Ensure that any local work to tackle social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users
- 5.5. Promote the national access support card for health and social care use locally and ensure staff are aware of how to respond
- 5.6. Consider how the needs of BSL users can be integrated into the See Hear strategic framework for meeting the needs of people with a sensory impairment, to ensure the seamless provision of assessment, care and support
- 5.7. Promote local and national organisations that offer support to the deaf and hearing impaired

6. Culture and the Arts



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 2024, we will:

- 6.1. Improve access to information about Culture and the Arts on our website for BSL users

7. Democracy



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 2024, we will:

- 7.1. Take opportunities to promote 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