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# **British Sign Language (BSL) Local Action Plan**

## **2024 to 2029**

**May 2024**

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**Glasgow Council Family**

**British Sign Language (BSL)  
Local Action Plan 2024 to 2029**

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**For further information on Glasgow City Council’s BSL Action Plan, please contact the Corporate Policy and Governance team:**

**Email      [BSL@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:BSL@glasgow.gov.uk)**

**Copies in alternative formats and community languages will be made available on request.**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and the British Sign Language National Plan 2017 – 2023 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish local action plans by October 2018 and on a six yearly basis, thereafter, showing how they will promote and support British Sign Language (BSL).
- 1.2 The first [BSL Action Plan](#) was published in 2018-2023 and highlighted areas of focus across all services of the Council. The final progress update was presented to the [Operational Performance Delivery and Scrutiny Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024](#).
- 1.3 However, it should be noted that COVID 19 presented significant barriers in relation to service provision and accessibility during the latter period of the original plan. It reduced our capacity to engage in face-to-face communication, which is always the preferred mode of communication for the Deaf Community. Additionally it also required service redesign; particularly a shift to online engagement which presented unique challenges for the Community.
- 1.4 One key reflections and lesson from the implementation of the previous plan was the inflexibility in the setting of actions. No provision was made for further BSL Service User or Service Department input to reflect changing circumstances throughout the implementation period of the plan. This was certainly highlighted by developing responses to COVID. It is therefore intended that the BSL Plan 2024-2029 will be a live plan; allowing for iterative changes; where necessary; and where agreed by both the Services and Service Users, with input from and notification to Elected Members. This will facilitate continuous dialogue with the Deaf Community through the BSL User Reference Group.
- 1.5 Glasgow Council Family has developed a plan for 2024-2029 around some key themes identified by the Scottish Government, Service Users, Services and Partners; outlining key areas for action over the next 6 years:
  - Across all Services
  - Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare
  - School Education
  - Training, Work and Social Security
  - Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing
  - Culture and the Arts
  - Justice
  - Democracy
- 1.6 The Scottish Government also require Glasgow to publish an interim progress report in 2026. This will be based on the local plan but more of a summary/high level version and will help refine some of the actions we will deliver by 2029.

## 2. Glasgow Context

- 2.1 BSL is the first or preferred language of some D/deaf people. It is also used by many people who are not deaf, for example, relatives and friends of D/deaf people and sign language interpreters. This Action Plan, by statute, requires us to look primarily at the needs and requirements of BSL users directly and provide support and resource when appropriate.
- 2.2 According to [Glasgow City Health & Social Care Partnership Demographics and Needs Profile](#), there are currently 1,850 active users of BSL recorded in Glasgow City. From the Census, 0.2% of the population in Scotland report using BSL at home, and Health Board Area for Greater Glasgow & Clyde indicate about 0.25%. On that basis, there has been an increase in BSL use since our last update in 2021. It should also be noted that there is often a wider community of support and care that use BSL in the City; it is therefore likely that the true figure of daily usage is greater.

## 3. Engagement

- 3.1 Following advice from the Scottish Government's BSL Nation Plan Launch event, the Chief Executive Department proposed a multi strand approach to engage with the BSL community as widely as possible and to gather views and suggestions for inclusion in the Glasgow Council Family BSL action plan. Officers met with local Deaf organisations to listen and go over the proposed approach to ensure it was appropriate and accessible to the community.
- 3.2 As the Action Plan develops, we will continue to engage with our local Deaf Communities, organising drop-in sessions to ensure the Council are up to date with ongoing issues and concerns.
- 3.3 Development of the Draft Action Plan

In November 2023, Officers attended the Scottish Government's launch of their BSL National Plan, which was hosted by the British Deaf Association. This event included discussion on the structure and dimensions of refreshing the local BSL Plan, in which local authorities shared and exchanged their key lessons learned and engagement methods over the previous two years. At this event, there were workshops where local authorities were able to meet and communicate with BSL users to discuss service provision and barriers that BSL users face daily. Feedback from the workshops included:

- The Deaf community is a diverse community, with intersecting characteristics and thus, there should be more opportunities for all Deaf people to be consulted both online and face-to-face engagement.
- The Council's BSL translation videos require more visibility – but it was recognised for being used a lot by the Deaf community.
- Appreciation for the Council's interpreting service e.g. for museums, schools etc.
- A clearer platform for Deaf users to access funding pathways – and to allow for better understanding on how BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 funding is being appropriately allocated.

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- Maintaining strong communication between local councils and the NHS Boards with Deaf community members, to ensure awareness/information is consistent.
- More participation within Deaf clubs because they are valuable for promoting engagement and unity between various and diverse Deaf communities and public services.
- Setting up a central database or information hub to store and exchange information about the BSL Local Action Plans, BSL events, online translations, updated list of Deaf clubs/groups.

In early January 2024, in affiliation with British Deaf Association and Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (GCHSCP), we attended the Central Scotland Deaf Club to collect further feedback on what the new BSL Local Action Plan 2023-2029 should include. Some issues raised do not directly fall under Council responsibility – for example, transport and housing – and we will feed these comments back to the relevant organisations. On areas with which we do have input, such as digital accessibility and access to Council services, we will include the actions going forward.

Feedback from this engagement included:

- Difficulty accessing services and procedures regarding potholes, bins etc.
- Accessibility issues regarding the Council website – this is an ongoing action to resolve website explanations and ensure PDFs etc are BSL user friendly.
- Accessibility issues surrounding updates/information relating to benefit and council tax procedures, officer closures etc.
- Not having a definitive BSL user contact within the Council to mitigate the above.

3.4 At the end of March 2024, the Corporate Policy Team organised an engagement session to inform and update the local Deaf community on the Action Plan. This session included providing a presentation on our updates and actions from each service area and what the outline of the Action Plan would entail.

Feedback from this engagement included:

- When the User Reference Working Group is set up – ensure there are representatives from all backgrounds and surrounding Deaf Communities.
- Deaf culture is important – providing a platform/space for opportunities/activities to be communicated appropriately in relation to health, wellness, sports etc.
- BSL teaching/tutor qualifications are not official as mainstream teaching qualifications – which provides a barrier to jobs/opportunities.
- More visible BSL communications for service updates such as roads, bins, complaint services etc.

### 3.5 **Ongoing engagement**

As well as continuing dialogue with local Deaf organisations, the Action Plan includes a commitment to establish a BSL user reference group. This will ensure that the BSL

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Community remains fully involved in the implementation of the action plan. Although it had been planned to reconvene the group on an annual basis, however the COVID response has interrupted this, although the group continues to be contacted directly both as part of our direct [COVID response in 2020](#). In addition to this, our priority is to ensure the BSL user reference group is a consistent method of communication going forward in 2024. As part of the iterative approach, we have the first of two BSL User Reference Groups in 2024 scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024. This will allow us to reflect on the published plan; and get further feedback from the Community on how we can collaboratively deliver on the actions outlined. There will be second Group meeting in October 2024.

- 3.6 Officers have established good working relationships with many of the Deaf organisations in the City and intend to maintain this during the implementation process. This group will ensure that two-way engagement is established and consistent.
- 3.7 It is important to note that after the publication of the BSL Local Action Plan, engagement with the local deaf community will continue.

## 4. Next Steps

- 4.1 A BSL version of this plan will be produced following approval. The Plan will then be published on the Council webpage, communicated to the Scottish Government and circulated to local Deaf organisations and British Deaf Association.
- 4.2 Glasgow City Council will provide a progress update to the Scottish Government in 2024, in line with the National progress report. In order to monitor implementation; an interim progress report and update to the user reference group, will be prepared by the Equality Working Group on an annual basis.
- 4.3 Where appropriate, actions arising from this process will be considered as part of the review of the Council Family Equality Outcomes which the Council Family are required to provide a progress report and review of associated actions by end of March 2025.
- 4.4 Publication of the BSL Action Plan 2018-2023 is a key development that was included within the Equality and Mainstreaming Report 2021-2025 and addressed how it challenges the Council Family to improve accessibility for the BSL Community. The updated BSL Action Plan 2023-2029 will be featured when the Report is refreshed in 2025, along with updates on what the Action Plan has achieved so far in terms of engagement and service actions.

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## 5. Glasgow City Council British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan

### 5.1 Across all our services

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

*“Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users”*



#### Our Actions

- We will re- establish our reference group of BSL users to continue to develop actions over the duration of the plan and to address any emerging issues with regard to service delivery.
- Improve access to our information and services for BSL users, including making our website and social media more accessible to BSL users.

This will include:

- Active consideration of BSL friendly options as part of the development of our new Corporate Communications Strategy.
  - Complete the review the Sign Language Interpreting Service.
  - Improve availability of information about services through BSL videos.
  - Explore training opportunities for Communications staff on how BSL is structured to consider when writing website materials and leaflets.
  - Look to expand the number of Glasgow Life venues which have BSL welcome videos.
  - We will promote the co-design of GCHSCP website and social media platforms with BSL user by incorporating BSL videos.
  - Scope the potential of specific BSL fluency and expertise within Communication and Policy areas of Council Family business
- Continue to promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’ to staff and to local BSL users. This will be done through referencing on our ‘contact us’ sections of the website and through training of call centre staff, and part of our new website design.

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- Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL and deaf awareness training.
- In terms of general access to our services across the Council Family, we will:
  - Undertake a skills audit of staff to determine who can use BSL and who would like to learn it.
  - Consider incorporating BSL spell your name signage for children and accompanying adults as part of playpark refurbishments.
  - Continue to provide BSL sessions as part of adult learning week in Glasgow Life.



## 5.2 Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services 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.’*

### Our Actions

By 2029, we will:

- In partnership with GCHSCP, develop a signposting resource for parents of newly diagnosed Deaf children, including access to BSL for babies and children.
- Work with Social Work staff within GCHSCP to help them understand the importance of BSL provision on child and family wellbeing.
- Deliver a programme of staff awareness for Social Work staff about the importance of BSL provision on child and family wellbeing.
- Increase awareness of adaptations available for Deaf parents of babies.
- Continue to support Education Services in accessing interpreter support in schools. Including; parent/teacher evenings, school performances and classroom support.

### 5.3 School Education



We share the long-term goal for school education 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 2029, we will:

- Identify, provide for and review the additional support needs of our children and young people, including those who are deaf under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. This includes the presumption of mainstream which enables children to learn in an environment that best suits their needs.
- Support opportunities for early years workers to learn BSL up to the level of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6 to inform our future work in this area. SCQF Level 6 BSL is offered by Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and is equivalent to Signature’s BSL Level 3.
- To review the provision for deaf children in early years to ensure they are given the right support to learn BSL, as appropriate and identify a specialist early years centre, if required.
- Support opportunities for teachers of the deaf and teachers working with deaf and deafblind children and young people in obtaining qualifications up to SCQF Level 10. SCQF Level 10 is equivalent to Signature Level 6 in BSL, which is the highest possible qualification available as of October 2023. SQA’s highest qualification in BSL is Level 4, which is equivalent to SCQF Level 8 and Signature Level 4 in BSL.
- Support the development of opportunities for deaf and deafblind children, young people, and their families, to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL, especially in Scotland.
- Develop opportunities for deaf and deafblind young people to learn about transitioning into and navigating the workplace, helping them understand the support available to them and develop their skills. This will include how to work with BSL/English interpreters.

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- Promote and support the learning of BSL as a second language for hard of hearing, deafened people and people at risk of a second sensory loss. People at risk of a secondary sensory loss should be better equipped with tools for them to communicate. Learning BSL as a second language provides an opportunity for this.
- Support BSL organisations to celebrate BSL culture and heritage to strengthen the community, share their rich and vibrant culture, and feel more widely valued within society. We will explore opportunities for children and young people helping to foster greater visibility of deaf role models, the development of a secure sense of identity, and reduced loneliness and social isolation.
- Ensure early years protocols are in place for children 0-5 to ensure optimal wellbeing and language acquisition and development.
- Access to play based experiences that promote receptive and expressive communication.
- Effective and enhanced transitions from early years to primary school promote a continuation of developmental progress. Supports are in place to develop and promote communication and relationships.
- Inclusion opportunities promote wellbeing and communication. Creative learning experiences enrich all aspects of development. Progress and accomplishments are tracked and celebrated.

In doing so, the following actions will require to be overtaken by 2029:

- Continue to recognise and support the current high-quality provisions for deaf learners in Glasgow and maintain funding for specialist staff and specialist training.
- Provide BSL Language Tutors to enable Glasgow Education Services to:
  - support opportunities for early years workers, teachers of the deaf and teachers working with deaf and deafblind children and young people to gain appropriate qualifications.
  - ensure that Glasgow is able to meet the commitment to promote and support the learning of BSL as a second language for hard of hearing, deafened people and people at risk of a second sensory loss.
- Engage with third sector organisations to enable deaf and deafblind children, young people and their families to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL and the deaf community. This will promote greater visibility of deaf role models, produce a stronger deaf identity and reduce social isolation.

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- Provide CLPL opportunities to enhance professional understanding of language acquisition and how to provide optimal play-based experiences for young deaf / blind children.
- Ensure practice reflects policy and procedure in relation in effective enhanced transitions at key transition stages – Early Years, Primary and Secondary.
- Effective protocols promote successful inclusion opportunities to support deaf / blind young people to experience progressive, challenging and creative learning experiences.
- Roles and responsibilities of staff are defined to ensure every learners' achievements and successes are tracked to ensure progression in wellbeing, learning and development.
- Develop a comprehensive Glasgow programme to support the transition of deaf and deafblind young people into the workplace.

## 5.4 Training, Work and Social Security



We share the long-term goal for training, work and social security 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.”*

### Our Actions

By 2029, we will:

- Where an individual has BSL requirements, the teamwork will seek additional support and work in collaboration with specialists including the Hearing Impairment Inclusions Support Services based at Hazelwood School. Employability provision is provided to all Glasgow young people, including BSL users, as part of the Towards Better Futures programme.
- 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.
- Continuing to support the All in Glasgow Partnership employability project which is led by Enable. This project provides disability service around supported employment and support to disabled people including BSL users.
- 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.

## 5.5 Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

We share the long-term goal for health, mental 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 to make informed choices at every stage of their lives.”*



### Our Actions

By 2029, we will:

- In partnership with GCHSCP, build on the work set out within the social isolation and loneliness strategy, Recovering our Connections 2023-26, to embed actions related to BSL users and link with existing work at a local and national level to address issues of social isolation and loneliness, including access to services and project:
  - Actively promote access to funding linked to tackling social isolation and loneliness to BSL organisations and take steps to a more accessible funding application process.
  - Develop and support a targeted BSL campaign as part of Loneliness Awareness week, beginning 2025.
  - Raise awareness with Social Work staff on the impacts of social isolation and loneliness on Deaf BSL users to support access to services and programmes.

## 5.6 Transport

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

*“BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland.”*



### Our Actions

By 2029, we will:

- As part of the connected transport strategy, the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership will support the development of specific BSL actions for safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport.

## 5.7 Culture and the Arts

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 2029, we will:

- Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals by improving access to the historical environment, cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users.
  - Within new museum displays we will share stories about Deaf history, artists, or themes where objects support these stories.
  - Continue to support regular tours in BSL at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Riverside Museum.
  - Roll out interpreted tours to the Mitchell Library.
  - Continue to support interpreted events as part of festival performances.
  - Support BSL users, particularly young people to get the most from cultural opportunities by building relationships with organisations such as Solar Bear.
  - Support D/deaf artists to be a fully inclusive part of performances.
  - As part of the Burrell collection redevelopment, investigate making use of technology such as [Signly](#) to ensure displays are accessible.
  - Work in collaboration with BSL users to create a display at the redeveloped Burrell collection.
- Encourage and support BSL users to consider a career in culture and the arts.
  - Promote both voluntary and professional art opportunities to BSL users.
  - Promote future careers in culture and arts by working closely with partners such as Solar Bear, Deaf Youth Theatre and the Royal Conservatoire.
  - Work with the Royal Conservatoire BSL Acting MA for future programming at the Burrell Collection.



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- Continue to support volunteer guides by offering opportunities for volunteering and training.
- Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on relevant websites.
  - Look to expand the number of Glasgow Life venues which have BSL welcome videos.

## 5.8 Justice

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

*“BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland.”*



### Our Actions

By 2029, we will:

- Implement the BSL recommendations from the Criminal Justice Disability Project, as part of review of Community Justice, which includes:
  - Better inform solicitors that funding can be sought for “special arrangements” needed by clients e.g. BSL interpreter or to visit a client at home.
  - All correspondence should be in Plain English. Improve staff awareness of the needs of D/deaf people and how to respond to BSL translation requests.
- Roll out a programme of BSL Awareness Sessions for Staff within Social Work Criminal Justice to ensure Deaf BSL users have access to support as part of assessment and supervision in the community.

## 5.9 Democracy

We share the long-term goal for democracy 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.”*



### Our Actions

By 2029, we will:

- 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.
  - We will highlight the fund in all Local Government and Scottish Parliament by elections.
  - Include details of the fund in all of our nomination packs and discussions with any potential candidates.
  - Be more proactive in readying elected office support provided to support BSL users.
- Consider how the Access to Elected Office fund could be used to promote the involvement of BSL users in Community Councils.
- As part of a digital review, consider the information that should be available online in BSL for potential elected members.
- With the Improvement Service, consider the advice, training, and guidance available for elected members.