



British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2018-2024



Prepared under the British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015

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SECTION 2:

2.1 Introduction

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for British Sign Language (BSL) users* to live, work and visit. This means that people whose first or preferred language is BSL will be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to prepare and publish a BSL plan every six years, to set out how they will promote and support BSL. This is the first BSL Local Plan for West Lothian Council and sets out actions we will take over the period 2018-2024.

This BSL Local Plan follows the BSL National Plan published on 24 October 2017, which was developed through extensive consultation and engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them. It is framed around the same long term goals as the National Plan and sets out what we will do to support BSL users in West Lothian.

This Local Plan will link to our Strategic Commissioning Plans for all care groups to ensure we are meeting the needs of our diverse communities.

This Local Plan aims to protect and promote equal access to services and support for BSL users in West Lothian.

* Wherever we refer to 'BSL users' we mean D/deaf and/or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is BSL.

2.2 West Lothian in Context

West Lothian is a great place to live, work and do business, West Lothian Council aims to improve the quality of life and opportunities for all citizens. We are a top performing Council with a reputation for innovation, partnership working and customer focus.

The Council is central to the provision of services that affect people's everyday lives, for example, housing, education, libraries, leisure and benefits. We therefore recognise that all services provided by the Council need to reflect and consider the impact that they may have on equality. We aim to provide improved services that meet the needs and priorities of local communities.

West Lothian is the ninth largest local authority in Scotland serving a population of approximately 178,500, accounting for 3.3% of Scotland's population and one of the youngest and fastest growing in the country.

According to the last Census in 2011 there were 463 people living in West Lothian using BSL at home, 124 of those are under 18.

2.3 Consultation and Engagement

Consultation and engagement with the BSL users of West Lothian was key to the development of this Local Plan.

In February 2018 West Lothian Council participated in a Pan Lothian consultation event involving other local authorities, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Lothian and other interested organisations and groups.

This was followed up in June 2018 with a West Lothian Council specific consultation event. This involved council officers, Community Planning, partner organisations and West Lothian residents who use BSL.

A draft Local Plan was developed based on the consultation and engagement undertaken and the draft plan was then available to view on the council's website in BSL and English.

The feedback from the consultation and engagement informed the final actions within this Local Plan.

SECTION 3

3.1 Executive Summary

The aim of the BSL Local Plan for West Lothian 2018-24 is to set out actions which will improve the way BSL users find out about and access our services. We will work more closely with the BSL users who are residents of West Lothian, so that they can inform us about their experiences and provide us with feedback to ensure we make our services more accessible.

The Local Plan will help us to work with the third sector partners we commission to make sure BSL users can access a range of services.

Below is a summary of some of the actions we plan to undertake:-

- Promote the use of the Scottish Governments nationally funded BSL Interpreting video relay services contact SCOTLANDBSL to employees and local BSL users as a means of making initial contact with West Lothian Council.
- Continue to support the Pan- Lothian Sensory Leads Group.
- Take forward advice developed by Education Scotland to:-
 - a) Improve the way teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and
 - b) Ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can be further involved in their child's education.
- Improve recording systems within Education Services to enable us to determine how many BSL young people we have in our schools.
- Work with third sector providers and report on the number of BSL users who access their services.
- Increase our employees' awareness, knowledge and understanding of the deaf community, culture, language and service provision.
- Work with local BSL users and partners to develop systems and information to ensure our services are accessible.

SECTION 4:

BSL Local Plan for West Lothian

4.1: 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”

By 2024, we will:

- Analyse the existing evidence we have about BSL users in our organisation; so that we can establish baseline data and identify key gaps in information. We will use this information to focus resources on improving specific services and to measure progress of this plan.
- Increase employee awareness, knowledge and understanding of the deaf community, deaf culture, and language and service provision.
- Hold a central database of information relating to the BSL competencies and skills of our employees to help us focus training and development activities.
- Include a question in our equalities questionnaires/monitoring forms in relation to the use and understanding of BSL.
- Work with local deaf/deafblind organisations to develop a programme of training and awareness for front line employees and those who work directly with BSL users. Improve access to our information and services for BSL users including making our website more accessible to BSL users by:-
 - Working with local BSL users and partners to develop systems and information to ensure our services are accessible.
 - Using the intranet and internet to promote the use of the Scottish Government’s funded BSL online interpreting video relay services contactSCOTLANDBSL to employees and to local BSL users.
 - Working with local residents who are BSL users to make the West Lothian Council website and other digital mediums more accessible.

4.2: 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 D/deaf or Deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL”

Our Actions

By 2024, we will:

- Provide staff training and information about BSL and deaf culture, and about the resources that are available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or deafblind child.
- Ensure families of D/deaf and deafblind children have access to nationally developed BSL resources.
- Promote Bookbug sessions that are available in West Lothian to D/deaf and deafblind families.
- Improve recording systems within Education Services to enable us to determine how many BSL young people we have in our schools and those young people who may have parents and / or guardians who are BSL users.

4.3: 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”

By 2024, we will:

- Review the level of BSL knowledge and skills across our teaching and education support staff. This will enable us to complete competency assessments to identify and focus resources on areas of improvement and share good practice where it exists.
- Implement advice developed by Education Scotland to a) Improve the way teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and b) ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can be further involved in their child’s education.
- Contribute to the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (SCILT) programme of work to support the learning of BSL in schools for hearing pupils as part of the 1+2 programme, including the sharing of best practice and guidance.
- Ensure that deaf parents/guardians have access to information in BSL. This includes report cards, parents evenings, routine information and to encourage their participation in Parent Councils.

4.4: 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”

By 2024, we will:

- Ensure BSL speaking pupils and students are supported with appropriate and accessible information, advice and guidance about their career and learning choices and the transition process to these options.
- Work with partners both externally and internally who deliver employment services, and with employer groups already supporting employability to help signpost them to specific advice on the needs of 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.
- Identify young people working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland.

4.5: 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”

By 2024, we will:

- Signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL and b) contribute to the development of a directory of services across the Lothians for Deaf and hard of hearing residents.
- Work to improve the information available to BSL users regarding Psychological Services and ensure that these services and therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users.
- Take steps to improve access to information for BSL users about sport and to local sports facilities and sporting opportunities.
- Ensure that any local work to tackle social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users.
- Provide specialist assessment and support services for BSL users and people who are deaf until March 2019 together with interpretation duty sessions and equipment through a contract with an external provider until March 2019.
- Review the above provision and commission appropriate services to run from April 2019 in consultation with the BSL community.

4.6: 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”

By 2024, we will:

- Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.
- Encourage and support BSL users to consider a career in culture and the arts.
- Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on relevant websites and at venues.
- Improve access to the historical environment, cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users.
- Explore the use of digital technology to enhance the experience of BSL users when visiting exhibitions and / or accessing museum collections.

4.7: 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 2024, 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.
- Support BSL users to participate in community engagement events.
- Raise awareness among Elected Members about [contactSCOTLANDBSL](#).

Section 5:

Contact Information

If you would like more information about this plan please contact:

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BSL users can contact us via <https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>