

Scottish Borders Council & NHS Borders British Sign Language (BSL) Action Plan

2024 -2030



Across our Services

Action Plan

This BSL Action Plan has been put together to support the BSL National Plan, published on 6th November 2023. The Council's and NHS Borders BSL Plan 2024 - 2030 will have six key priorities. These actions are consistent with the ten long term goals of the National BSL Plan in Scotland, which are, across our services family support, early learning & childcare, school education, post school education, training; work & social security, health care (inc social care) mental health & wellbeing, transport, culture & arts, justice and lastly democracy.

These goals represent the Scottish Government's current aim, "To embed BSL further in other relevant government policies, plan & strategies". This document outlines the Council plan to ensure that people whose first or preferred language is BSL are empowered to exercise their rights in accessing Council and NHS Borders Services they need, and staff are fully responsive to their needs. Thus, help "to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work, visit & learn".

Introduction

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every 6 years, demonstrating how they will promote and support BSL.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 aims to:

1. Promote awareness and use of BSL; and
2. Improve access to services for Deaf and Deaf- blind people.

The 2011 Census highlighted that 228 people in the Scottish Borders use BSL as a language other than English. The statistics from the Census undertaken in 2022 are not known at this time, however, they are expected to be available later in 2024 and will be shared following publication.

The Council's BSL Plan was developed with representatives of the Council and NHS Borders.

The purpose of the Act is to, "...promote the use of BSL." The Council and NHS Borders will implement measures to promote awareness of BSL and the use of BSL, with the long-term goal being that across Scotland information and services will be accessible to all BSL users*".

The Scottish Government have a number of actions, and these have been grouped into the following areas:

- Delivering the BSL National Plan – 2023 to 2029
- BSL Accessibility
- Children and Young People & their families
- Access to employment
- Health & Wellbeing
- Celebrating BSL Culture
- BSL Data
- Transport

- Access to justice
- Democratic participation

What the Council and NHS Borders will do:

1. The consideration of establishing a BSL Action Plan Group for 2024 to 2030 with the help of the Deaf Community, Council, NHS Borders, See Hear Group, who will act as a reference group to monitor and review the actions laid out within the plan;
2. Supported by of the BDA, Helen Morgans-Wenhold, BSL Equality and Inclusion Officer – Local Authorities, The See & Hear Group and the South of Scotland Deaf Children's Society;
3. To review the plan in light of the Scottish Government's National Plan and the Inclusive communication regulation proposal, due to be implemented in 2025.

Consultation

The Council and NHS Borders had held a number of face-to-face consultations throughout January to April 2024. These consultations have shaped the proposed actions contained in this current plan. The Council and NHS Borders will also carry out an online consultation in May 2024 and the outcome of the consultation will be made available on the Council and NHS Borders webpages.

In partnership with, the Council and NHS Borders, we will continue to engage with the Deaf Community developing, reviewing and monitoring the action plan and we will continue working with stakeholders to:

1. Ensure BSL users are able to access the services they need;
2. Implement the actions proposed;
3. Provide updates on progress and
4. Evaluate what is working and develop further actions when required.

The lead officers for Scottish Borders Council's & NHS Borders BSL Action Plan are as follows:

Senior Business Services Officer
Business Improvement
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose
TD6 OSA

Health Improvement Practitioner
Communities Team JHIT
Department of Public Health

*Whenever 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 of preferred language is British Sign Language.



Across our Services – 2024 - 2030

Action	Priority	Comment	Timescale	Lead
<p>1.1 Delivering the BSL National Plan – 2023 to 2029 the Council and NHS Borders Action Plan will ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Records hold accurate information about BSL Users;• BSL Users can engage with services in the manner they choose (interpreter, Contact Scotland BSL, written format etc);• Provision to staff of the Council and NHS Borders for opportunities to train in BSL awareness (this includes training in basic BSL)	Improving information about who uses BSL in Scotland			
<p>2.1 BSL Accessibility – improving access to, and the use of BSL by Scottish Borders Council & NHS Borders</p> <p>2.2 To continue to engage with the Deaf Community throughout the duration of the BSL Plan</p> <p>2.3 Consider setting up a working group to monitor the BSL plan during 2024 to 2030</p>	<p>To review BSL videos on the Council website</p> <p>Improving access to, and use of, BSL by Scottish Public Services. (Contact Scotland BSL) British Sign Language (BSL) NHS inform</p> <p>Addressing the shortage of BSL interpreters and other professionals in Scotland</p>	Currently through HA Sensory Team requires 3 weeks' notice (min)		

<u>Action</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Lead</u>
<p>3.1. To raise awareness of BSL as part of the 1 + 2 package and support schools wishing to include this as part of their curriculum.</p> <p>3.2 Promote and support learning in BSL across schools/ELC in the Scottish Borders</p> <p>3.3 Consideration of a nominated BSL lead in schools, to work with BSL users to promote BSL learning in schools</p> <p>3.4 To look at compiling a list of Deaf BSL users who would like to be Deaf role models for Deaf children & young people. To help them become more confident in having BSL identity and having access to BSL culture.</p> <p>3.5 Work in partnership with Borders College to look at options for further qualifications in BSL for staff and students</p> <p>3.6 Consideration towards making deaf awareness training mandatory.</p> <p>3.7 Consider working with other agencies in the Scottish Borders to provide BSL/Deaf awareness classes</p>	<p>Children and Young People & their families. In relation to BSL from our Teachers of the Deaf Service we offer an Introductory Session to BSL 1+2 languages</p> <p>Support for deaf children and their families learning BSL in the early years. Gap identified for under 5</p> <p>Raise awareness of Contact Scotland BSL</p> <p>Accessing social care and wellbeing services in BSL.GIRFEC</p>	<p>We believe priority three is particularly important. The early years are a crucial time for language and communication development</p> <p>All parents of deaf children in Scotland should have the choice to learn sign language without financial or geographical barriers making it hard to access classes</p>		

<u>Action</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Lead</u>
4.1 Access to Employment - Support BSL Users in the workplace/ access work grant to provide Interpreters, and adaptations to ensure their health & wellbeing	ATW grant – Focus on CYP GIRFEC No one left behind to make any job opportunities service accessible in BSL so Deaf BSL users could feel confident to apply. Consider staff training in BSL to mentor a Deaf BSL user			
5.1 Health & Wellbeing - Appropriate support to access relevant services – apps available – Contact Scotland BSL	Key – communication Create a list of options for local Deaf BSL users to choose the communication support that they would wish to use	NHS Borders will improve identification of when an interpreter is to be booked ahead of an appointment, so appropriate provision can be made	There are a range of options available to BSL users in accessing services, e.g., an interpreter, Contact Scotland BSL, written format, etc. Depending on BSL Users preferred method of communication	
6.1 Celebrating BSL Culture – Supporting access to culture and promoting Deaf heritage	Promoting Deaf heritage and culture in BSL	Grants to deaf clubs?		
7.1 BSL Data – That data on BSL users is used to inform statutory services to provide services - (with consent) 7.2 Continue to collect feedback and information from Deaf BSL users via face-to-face engagement as part of data collection				

<u>Action</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Lead</u>
<p>8.1 Transport - support access for BSL users to access transportation they require.</p> <p>8.2 To work in partnership with other agencies to share resources to make transport more accessible to people and young people when they require it</p>	<p>Accessibility to information in BSL-sign in real time proposed (so people know when bus is due) – look at text alerts /other options for young people when services are cancelled</p>			
<p>9.1 Access to Justice – provision of interpreters/ translation into BSL for anyone BSL user requiring access – Police app</p>	<p>As above</p>			
<p>10.1 Democratic Participation – Support to vote, information in BSL format</p>	<p>As above</p>			