

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 11 June 2024

The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030 – referral from the Policy and Sustainability Committee

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine

1. For Decision/Action

- 1.1 The Policy and Sustainability Committee has referred a report on the City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030 to the Education, Children and Families Committee to scrutinise and discuss the implementation of the Plan, with the final Plan to be brought back to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for approval.

Dr Deborah Smart

Executive Director of Corporate Services

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Referral Report

The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030 – referral from the Policy and Sustainability Committee

2. Terms of Referral

2.1 On 29 May 2024, the Policy and Sustainability Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services on the City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030. The Plan set out the actions needed to ensure that British Sign Language (BSL) users could be fully involved in daily and public life in Edinburgh, as active, healthy citizens and able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

2.2 Towards this overarching vision, the plan established outcomes and high-level actions under nine themes, spanning many Council services areas. These actions would be further developed during implementation and throughout the lifespan of the Plan, led by further engagement with BSL users and stakeholders.

2.2 Decision

- 1) To agree that the Convener would meet with the National Deaf Children's Society and the Executive Director of Education, Children and Justice Services to further discuss the issues raised by the deputation.
- 2) To request a briefing note to this committee and the Education, Children and Families Committee on the background to the withdrawal of BSL classes.
- 3) To refer the report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services to the Education, Children and Families Committee to scrutinise and discuss the implementation of the Plan.
- 4) To agree that the British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030 would come to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for approval.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services, submitted.)

3. Background Reading/ External References

[Policy and Sustainability Committee of 28 May 2024 - webcast](#)

4. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10 am, Tuesday, 28 May 2024

The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030

Executive
Wards: all

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Note the statutory requirement for the Council to publish its second British Sign Language (BSL) Plan by May 2024
 - 1.1.2 Note the engagement and consultation activity carried out in development of this plan, and the plans for further consultation to support the implementation of the plan, and
 - 1.1.3 Approve the Council's second British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030 for publication on the Council website, in both English and BSL.

Deborah Smart

Executive Director of Corporate Services

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Report

The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In line with the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015, the Council's second British Sign Language Plan has been developed, covering the period 2024-2030.
- 2.2 The plan sets out the actions needed to ensure that British Sign Language (BSL) users can be fully involved in daily and public life in Edinburgh, as active, healthy citizens and able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.
- 2.3 Towards this overarching vision, the plan establishes outcomes and high level actions under nine themes, spanning many Council services areas. These actions will be further developed during implementation and throughout the lifespan of the plan, led by further engagement with BSL users and stakeholders.
- 2.4 Subject to approval by committee, the plan will be published on the Council's website in both English and BSL.

3. Background

- 3.1 The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 came into force in October 2015. It aims to make Scotland the best place in the world to live, work and visit for people whose first or preferred language is BSL.
- 3.2 The Act requires local authorities and other public bodies to publish their own BSL plans to outline how the organisation will promote and raise awareness of BSL. In October 2018 the Council met this requirement with publication of its first BSL plan, covering the period 2018 to 2024.
- 3.3 The Scottish Government published its second national BSL plan covering 2023-2029 in November 2023. In doing so, Government set a six-month timescale for local authorities and other public bodies to publish updated local BSL plans.
- 3.4 In recognition that this six month timescale provides for limited time to fully develop a new plan and consult formally with key stakeholders, the Scottish Government provided guidance to advise that these second plans should:
 - 3.4.1 Be considered as an iteration and development of existing plans,

- 3.4.2 Build on progress made during the lifespan of previous plans, responding to feedback from key stakeholders on what has worked well and where further work is needed, and,
- 3.4.3 Provide a high-level framework to steer actions, and be flexible in responding to changes and developments, rather than fixed and detailed at the outset.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The City of Edinburgh Council's second BSL plan covers the period 2024-2030. It sets a vision, aims and high-level actions under nine themes aligned to those in the National Plan for 2023-2029.
- 4.2 The Council's plan builds on the progress made in Edinburgh since 2018 when the first plan was published. During this period, the work of officers and partners has focused on actions aimed to:
 - 4.2.1 Improve awareness of BSL among managers and staff
 - 4.2.2 Improve accessibility to services for BSL users
 - 4.2.3 Improve communications to BSL users
- 4.3 Building on these actions, an initial draft of the Council's second plan was developed using the themes set out in the [National BSL Plan](#), and the feedback received during the [Scottish Government's extensive consultation](#) to support its development.
- 4.4 This initial draft was used as the basis of consultation and engagement with BSL users and other stakeholders, carried out between 4 March and 5 May 2024, including:
 - 4.4.1 Two in person consultation events, one morning session, hosted by Deaf Action, with support from the British Deaf Association, and an early evening session hosted at Waverley Court, attended in total by 28 BSL stakeholders
 - 4.4.2 One online consultation event featuring five BSL stakeholders, and
 - 4.4.3 Wider public consultation through the Council's online Consultation Hub.
- 4.5 A revised draft plan was considered by the Elected Members Equalities Working Group on 2 May 2024.
- 4.6 The feedback received from these activities was used to further develop the actions in the final plan, which is attached in Appendix 1.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Subject to approval by Committee, the plan and an accompanying BSL version of the plan will be published on the Council website.
- 5.2 In line with Scottish Government guidance, implementation of the plan will be developed throughout its lifespan through ongoing engagement with BSL

stakeholders, to make sure that actions for delivery are as effective as possible, and flexible enough to respond to developments and challenges as they emerge.

- 5.3 Initial priorities for implementation will include consultation and engagement on the detailed actions needed to deliver this plan. This will be taken forward through continued engagement with BSL users and other stakeholders, including collaboration with NHS Lothian and local authority colleagues in other Lothian council areas.
- 5.4 This process of implementation will be led by:
 - 5.4.1 An officers group, chaired by a lead policy and insight officer, with representatives from all relevant service areas including lead managers with responsibility for actions under each of the plan themes. This group will coordinate actions and share progress across the span of the plan and lead on reporting to elected member groups.
 - 5.4.2 In addition to this core group, implementation on two key themes for which cross council leadership is required will be taken forward by two dedicated working groups which will develop detailed implementation plans and monitor progress with delivery for actions related to:
 - 5.4.2.1 Improving accessibility. This working group will be chaired by the Communications team, with representatives from relevant service areas.
 - 5.4.2.2 Children, Young People and their Families. This group will be chaired by the Head of Education (Inclusion), with representatives from relevant service areas.
- 5.5 It is proposed that elected member engagement and scrutiny will be provided through:
 - 5.5.1 The Members Equalities Working Group, providing opportunities for elected member engagement in developing implementation actions, and initial scrutiny of annual progress reports, and
 - 5.5.2 The Policy and Sustainability Committee, through scrutiny of annual progress reports on the plan's implementation.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The initial phase of the plan will be delivered through existing resources. Where the implementation process highlights the need for additional resources, business cases will be developed for consideration by the Council's Leadership Team in the first instance.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The IIA process undertaken to support the development of the BSL plan identified implications for all protected characteristic groups.
- 7.2 Positive impacts for BSL users include: increased opportunities to access employment, education and learning, support and advice, culture and healthcare; more effective and informed support through a greater understanding of the BSL language and culture; these benefits cover all protected characteristic groups
- 7.3 The negative implications identified relate to the use of IT and digital technologies to improve accessibility, which might disadvantage older people and people experiencing poverty, who might not have access to digital equipment or the knowledge or confidence to use it.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 No immediate climate or nature emergency implications are arising from the actions in this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The Council's British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030 that is described in this report responds to a duty under the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. It has been developed to align with the national plan, and represents a continuation of the strategic direction and actions described in our first plan, for 2018-2024.
- 9.2 The plan responds to feedback from consultation at national and local level, and will be delivered through a collaborative approach with BSL stakeholders.
- 9.3 There is a risk that, if the draft plan is not approved by Committee, translation into BSL and publication of the plan will be delayed. This risks reputational damage and a failure to meet with the six-month timescale set in the legislation.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [The City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership British Sign Language Plan for Edinburgh, 2018-2024](#)
- 10.2 [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2023-2029](#)
- 10.3 [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2023-2029: consultation analysis](#)

11. Appendix

[The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for Edinburgh, 2024-2030](#)

A nighttime photograph of a city street, likely in Edinburgh, featuring a prominent tall, dark spire (St. Martin's Church) on the left. The street is lined with multi-story buildings, some of which are illuminated with warm yellow lights. In the distance, a building with a pinkish-purple dome is visible. The sky is a deep blue.

DRAFT BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN

2024-30

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Executive Summary

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 came into force in October 2015. It aims to make Scotland the best place in the world to live, work and visit for people whose first or preferred language is BSL.

Now that the Scottish Government have published their second plan for 2023-2029, local authorities and other public bodies must publish their own BSL plans in 2024, to outline how they will promote and raise awareness of the language.

This is Edinburgh's second plan, which will cover the period 2024-2030. The plan builds on the progress made in Edinburgh since 2018 when the first plan was published. During this period, partners have focused on the delivery of actions to:

- Improved awareness of BSL among managers and staff.
- Improved accessibility for BSL users.
- Improved communications to BSL users.

The plan sets out our ambitions and broad actions for this second phase to 2030.

Our ambition is for BSL users to be fully involved in daily and public life in Edinburgh, as active, healthy citizens and able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

We have developed the plan around nine themes, in line with the national plan, to help us to achieve this ambition. These themes are described below, along with what we are aiming to achieve:

1. **Delivering the BSL Plan.** Making real improvements for BSL users by collaborating with them and with partner organisations to deliver our plan effectively and developing data and evidence to shape services.
2. **BSL Accessibility.** BSL users will have access to the right information at the right time so that they can take full advantage of opportunities for learning, work and leisure, and getting any help or advice they need.
3. **Children, Young People and their Families.** Our aim is for every child who uses BSL to reach their full potential.
4. **Access to Employment.** BSL users will fulfil their potential by having the support they need to progress in their chosen career.
5. **Health and Wellbeing.** BSL users will have the relevant information and services they need to make informed choices about their health.
6. **Celebrating BSL Culture.** BSL will be recognised and celebrated as a language and a rich culture, and for BSL users to have full access to the cultural life of Edinburgh with equal opportunities to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts.
7. **Transport.** BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport, and the systems that support transport across the city.
8. **Access to Justice.** BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems across Scotland. This would include BSL users as perpetrator, witness or victim.

9. **Democratic Participation.** BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Edinburgh, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians, and as board members of our public bodies.

The plan will be reviewed and revised throughout its lifespan, through ongoing engagement with key BSL stakeholders, to make sure that it is as effective as possible, responding to developments and challenges as they emerge.

Foreword

The City of Edinburgh Council is committed 'ensuring that Edinburgh plays its part in making Scotland the best place in the world for British Sign Language (BSL) signers to live, work, visit and learn. As Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh has a special responsibility to promote and raise awareness of the language.

We know that for many people who use BSL, English is a second language, bringing challenges in everyday life – in school, work, healthcare, leisure, and in day to day activities like using buses or looking for information online.

Our ambition is for BSL users to be fully involved in daily and public life in Edinburgh, as active, healthy citizens, able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

We have spoken to BSL users in Edinburgh and they have told us what needs to change. This plan sets out a series of broad actions that the Council will take over the next six years for our ambition to be realised.

This plan will be delivered with the leadership of elected members and the support and dedication of staff across the council and its partners. We will work with BSL users throughout the life of the plan to review and develop our actions to make sure that we are making a real difference.

Councillor Cammy Day, Leader of the Council

Andrew Kerr, Chief Executive

Introduction

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act, 2015

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act came into force in October 2015. It requires certain authorities, including local authorities, to develop British Sign Language (BSL) plans that outline how they will promote and raise awareness of the language.

The Scottish Government published their second plan for 2023-2029 in October 2023. The Act requires the Council, along with the other public bodies, to publish their second plan within six months i.e. by the end of May 2024.

The City of Edinburgh Council's second plan will cover the period 2024-2030. It builds on the progress made over the course of the first plan and responds to feedback from BSL users and stakeholders about challenges, experiences, and their ambitions for the future.

This plan sets out the aims, objectives, and the action areas needed to meet the needs of BSL users in Edinburgh. Detailed implementation plans for the delivery of these actions will be developed in collaboration with BSL users throughout the life of the plan. The section on [Delivering Our Plan](#) provides an overview of the governance and partnership structures in place to lead the implementation of the plan.

Strategic context

The Council's plan for 2024-2030 aligns with the Scottish Government's [British Sign Language \(BSL\): National Plan for 2023-2029](#).

It also aligns the [2050 Edinburgh City Vision](#) where Edinburgh aspires to be a connected, inspired, fair and thriving city, and with the key priorities of the [City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan](#), which are to:

- Create good places to live and work in Edinburgh.
- Take all the local actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh.
- Work to deliver a net zero city by 2030.

Our People Strategy 2024 to 2027, Creating a Great Place to Work Together for the People of Edinburgh, outlines our vision for how we deliver the Business Plan through our people and our commitment to improving the working experience of all colleagues. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is central to the strategy and will be delivered through a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and plan from October 2024.

The BSL plan forms part of the Council's work to make a tangible difference to the lives of citizens who share protected characteristics, through the [Equality and Diversity Framework](#) for 2021-25, with the aims and vision of Edinburgh Learns for Life and the Edinburgh Imperatives which form the Council's strategic framework for Education.

Finally, the principles of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), our commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time, is core to our BSL plan.

Why do we need a BSL Plan?

BSL is a language with its own grammar and syntax. In advance of publication of the 2022 Census results, there are no reliable statistics available on the number of BSL users in Edinburgh. We know that for people who use it BSL may be their first language, relied upon by them to take part in everyday life as an essential part of their communication and social interaction.

Many people think that BSL is a signed version of written or spoken English and so subtitles or written English are an adequate alternative for BSL users. However, this is not the case, particularly for individuals who have been deaf from birth or early childhood. This means that BSL users can face barriers as a direct result of being excluded from communication and this can have negative impacts on every aspect of their life, including education, employment, and access to healthcare. Examples include:

- **Challenges with everyday activities** which involve communication, for example, booking a gas repair, using buses or trains and not being able to hear announcements, and not being able to use roadside phones to report a breakdown.
- **Children who use BSL** face challenges at school as they are learning in a language, English, which is not their first language and which is in a different modality (using speech and hearing rather than signing), so their communication needs are greater than and different to hearing learners with English as an additional language; these children miss out on much of the incidental learning which their hearing peers have access to.
- The need for interpreters and communication support workers at school can also affect the **child's social interactions** in the classroom as their presence unintentionally affects interactions with others.

There are other pressures and challenges in providing support to BSL users:

- **The Covid-19 pandemic** had a particularly negative impact on BSL using children through reduced access to language and communication. This has led to an increase in the need for intensive medium-term support with language, literacy, and communication.
- **The delays in diagnosis of deafness** among some babies and children, identified by the [British Academy of Audiology review of NHS Lothian Paediatric Audiology](#) (2021), led to delays in treatment and to an increased demand for support from the Council's services, including helping families to understand their child's deafness, and know how best to support their child at home and in education.
- **Teacher of the Deaf** caseloads in Edinburgh are around 73% higher than the national average, and across Scotland. A high proportion of the teacher population are

nearing retirement, and so additional appropriately qualified teachers of the deaf are needed.

- **Obtaining skills.** Achieving qualifications in BSL is time consuming and expensive, with limited opportunities in Scotland.

Progress since 2018

Our BSL plan 2024-2030 builds on the progress made since 2018, when Edinburgh's first plan was published, including:

Awareness raising

- Deaf Awareness sessions are provided around three times a year, targeting managers and front facing staff.
- A BSL e-Learning course is mandatory for staff in the Council's Customer Division.

Education

- We have developed deaf awareness training specifically for early years and childcare workers, giving information and resources to families as early as possible in their child's life. We offer drop-in sessions for parents of pre-school children to meet Teachers of the Deaf and third sector partners, as well as other families with deaf children in order to share information and support available to them.
- We have developed access to and celebration of BSL in early years, schools and lifelong learning since 2018.
- There has been good uptake of professional learning via the Highland Programme (a tool for teachers to use to learn and teach BSL as part of the curriculum).
- We are improving how our teachers and support staff can engage more effectively with parents who use BSL to encourage them to become more involved in their child's learning and we are exploring the use of new technology to communicate and share resources effectively.
- We consult regularly with parents of deaf BSL using children and young people in schools to identify any areas for improvement we can make.
- We offer British Sign Language (BSL) support and other communication needs within our Adult Education programme. We have provided specialised courses for BSL users, supported deaf individuals who want to partake in a mainstream course through our Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Adult) service and had discussions with our youth service team to include deaf children in our youth programmes.

Health and wellbeing

- We have improved information and access to support including promotion of Contact Scotland BSL and Contact 999.
- We have worked with NHS Lothian to share video clips e.g. on Covid vaccinations.

- A See Hear Fest was held in September 2023 which was attended by over 300 people, with over 40 groups and organisations who offer help, information and advice to people with sensory loss participating
- We provided funding for Deaf and BSL Awareness raising to staff and BSL courses.

Accessibility

- We introduced the Welcome application onto the Council website which allows service users to request support, including BSL interpreters, in advance of attending our offices.
- We installed five MS Microsoft computers with large screens for use in quiet rooms in four localities and one city centre location, with the potential to support video call interpretation whilst using the appropriate software.
- We have improved accessibility of the Council website and the Consultation Hub, including commissioning BSL videos for the top seven transactions with the Council.
- We have worked with placement students to create detailed access guides for all our cultural venues, as part of a project called Museums 4 All, which link up from the venues' landing pages onto our website to <https://www.accessibilityguides.org/>.

Culture – Museums and Galleries

- We introduced BSL provision to the Council's culture strategy service events and conferences.
- We have worked with BSL providers to make sure that provision is timely.
- We worked with See Hear to run in-person BSL and Visual Impairment tours from 2018-2020.
- We created BSL signed video tours for City Art Centre exhibitions between 2021-2023, working to make sure these can be used in the future.
- We produced BSL video tours for each of the Council's venues, including the Scott Monument and Nelson Monument, which are available on the venues' website.

Developing our BSL plan for 2024-2030

This second plan builds on the achievements of the Council's first BSL plan, which spanned 2018-2024. It will help us to progress further towards the aim of making Scotland the best place in the world to live, work and visit for people whose first or preferred language is BSL, set out in the [National Plan](#).

We developed a first draft of our plan for 2024-2030 using the themes of the ambitions set out in the National Plan¹, and the feedback received during the Scottish Government's extensive consultation² to support the development of the National Plan, which included an online consultation, which received 80 responses, and 43 community events.

Our draft plan included a vision, outcomes and actions. We asked people for their views on these at three consultation events in Edinburgh, two in person, attended by around 30 people in total, and one on-line session, attended by five people. We also made our draft plan available on the Council's Consultation Hub, and invited people to provide their views by email or through discussion.

Feedback from BSL users and stakeholders highlighted a range of issues and challenges that face BSL users:

- Accessing BSL interpreters, which impacts on all areas of life including health care, education and leisure. The limited numbers of BSL interpreters, teachers and tutors is a challenge for deaf people who are BSL as well as for parents and families who need support to develop their BSL.
- Finding information on:
 - i. how to access services, reporting a fault, or getting help on Council housing, rent arrears, benefits, and repairs.
 - ii. how to buy a tram ticket.
 - iii. how to find out about getting involved in community activities.
 - iv. whether an interpreter will be available.³
- Receiving communication from the Council such as a parking fine and having to go online to pay – *“there's too much information and it's a dense and difficult process. If there is a phone number to pay your parking fine, how can a BSL user do that?”*
- Behaviours which do not feel respectful because people lack awareness of BSL.
- Front line Council staff who don't know how to have good conversations with BSL users and ask meaningful questions.

¹ [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2023-2029](#)

² [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2023-2029: consultation analysis](#)

³ In response to this feedback, we have added a link to Contact Scotland BSL from the Council's website page.

- The isolation that BSL users can face in schools - BSL pupils can experience isolation and lack of opportunities for chatting with their peers if they have to speak through an adult interpreter.
- More engagement from Elected Members would be welcomed.

Further details are shown in Appendix 1.

The feedback from these sessions was used to develop a further draft of our BSL plan for 2024-2030 for consideration by the Elected Members Equalities Working Group and the Council's Policy and Sustainability Committee.

The Council's BSL Plan for 2024-30

Our ambition is for BSL users to be fully involved in daily and public life in Edinburgh, as active, healthy citizens, able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

For this to happen, equal access, opportunity, representation, and inclusion for all BSL users, needs to be understood as a fundamental right.

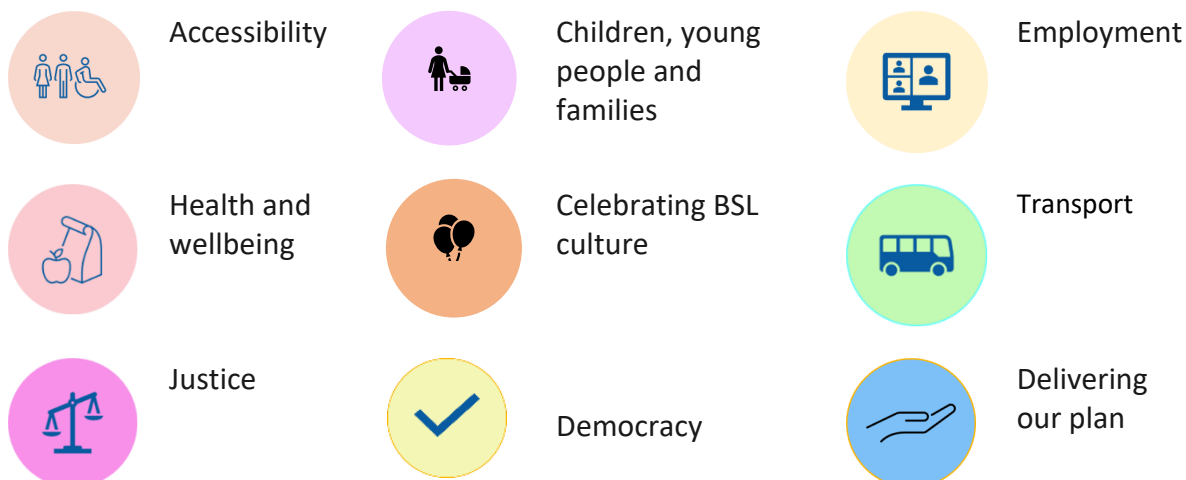
Principles

Feedback from the national plan highlighted a range of principles to guide delivery of the plan:

- **Equality** of access, opportunity, representation and inclusion for BSL users are a fundamental right.
- **Whole system approach**, which embeds actions across policies and services to address the barriers faced by BSL users.
- **Collaboration and partnership working** with BSL users in shaping how information and services are provided.
- **Choice**: BSL users need to have the freedom to choose and make informed decisions about their communication preferences and their access to public life was considered a key measure of equality.
- **Staff are supported** to have the knowledge and skills they need in their role to effectively support BSL users.
- **We celebrate the strengths and value** of the Deaf community and Deaf culture.


Action areas

There are nine themes which frame the actions for the plan:



Each of the nine themes is set out in the next section. For each, we have set out what we want to achieve and the broad actions that we will take over the next six years. Detailed implementation plans for the delivery of these actions will be developed in collaboration with BSL users throughout the life of the plan.

1. BSL Accessibility

	BSL users will have access to the right information at the right time so that they can take full advantage of opportunities for learning, work and leisure, and get any help or advice that they need.
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BSL users can face barriers and exclusion through language, which can impact their access employment, education and learning, support and advice, culture and healthcare.

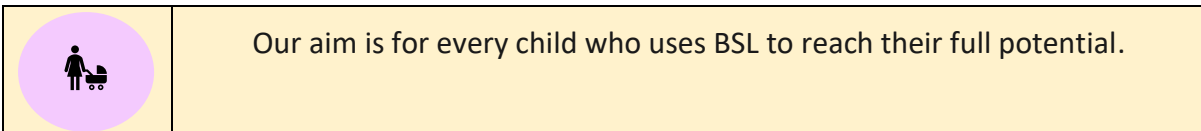
Action areas

- **Improve awareness and access to BSL/English interpretation** via the Welcome application, through consideration of SignPort which is being developed by the Scottish Government and through updated information on the Council's Interpretation and Translation Service.
- Explore the Council's approach to signposting how to request information in BSL, as well as other languages and formats e.g. placement in documents.
- **Improve the availability and quality of information about services**, especially through BSL videos, alternative options for contacting the Council, and increase awareness through promotion.
- **Improve the accessibility of information and support needed to vote** by investigating the use of appropriate technology in contacting the Returning Officer and Electoral

Registration Officer, and developing our Elections website pages to explain what support is available and what assistance including service animals, is allowed in polling stations.

- Continue to provide and promote **BSL and deaf awareness sessions** available to staff through the online learning hub and other internal channels, and to members of the public via the Adult Learning Programme.
- Improve support and access to information for **deaf colleagues who use BSL**.
- The Lifelong Learning service will investigate ways to create BSL translations for all the information published by Lifelong Learning.
- Continue to review social media and other guidance on good practice communications, incorporating BSL guidance.

2. Children, Young People and their Families



In this section, our aims and actions extend to include all children with a hearing impairment and those who are deafblind as well as BSL using children and young people. The actions include mainstream and special education.


We are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all learners, and we will continue to work towards this goal.

Action areas

- **Strengthen partnerships** between organisations to make sure that BSL users have the support they need at all stages of their learning.
- We will **fully embed GIRFEC** so that a child and their family are offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL.
- **Support development and learning at home and at school:**
 - o Continue to support Deaf children and their families around awareness and understanding of BSL.
 - o Explore options to support the parents of BSL using young people so that they can develop sufficient BSL to support their child.
 - o Ensure that staff are appropriately qualified, skilled and knowledgeable to support BSL users effectively.
 - o Increase staff capacity in specialist teams to meet the needs of children, including learners with more complex needs.
 - o Determine the workforce we need in the future to make sure that there we employ enough staff with the right qualifications.

- Explore the potential for virtual learning and for a learning hub to support children in schools, professional learning for staff, and opportunities for families to meet and support each other.
- **Support inclusion:**
 - Regularly promote the benefits of learning BSL to schools and offer training for staff and pupils to learn and become more confident in using sign language.
 - Increase deaf awareness, knowledge and skill in BSL in all schools among learners and staff, and promote awareness of the rich aspect of cultural heritage that BSL offers.
 - Ensuring that parent/carers who are BSL users have the same opportunities as other parent/carers to be fully involved in their child's education.
 - Explore options for further opportunities for young BSL users to engage and socialise with their BSL peers, including at weekends.
- **Moving on from school:**
 - Continue to liaise with careers officers and schools to support the transition from school.
 - Create new and improve existing pathways into positive destinations for children and young people who are BSL users.
 - Establish systems to gather data about deaf, deafblind and BSL users in post school destinations.
 - Develop opportunities for BSL role models.

3. Access to Employment

	<p>BSL users will fulfil their potential by having the support they need to progress in their chosen career.</p>
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People from all backgrounds should receive appropriate advice and support to be able to consider what route to employment is the right path for them.


Action areas

- Signpost BSL job seekers to the wide range of employability information, advice, and guidance available to advance their careers and learning choices through the Edinburgh Guarantee.
- Ensure Edinburgh Guarantee employability support and information is promoted across the city and provided in BSL format where appropriate.
- Ensure Edinburgh Guarantee providers and employers are supported and upskilled, so they can provide meaningful employability support (including work experience,

and training) to BSL users who wish to enter employment, education, or volunteering.

- Raise awareness of the UK Government's "Access to Work" Scheme with employers, employability providers, and BSL users to utilise the funding for BSL/English interpretation and adjustments.

4. Health and Wellbeing

	BSL users will have the relevant information and services they need to live active, healthy lives and to make informed choices.
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Clear and accessible information is key.

Action areas

- Promote and support the learning of BSL as a second language for the hard of hearing, deafened people and people at risk of a sensory loss.
- Continue work to address social isolation and loneliness.
- Provide information on the support available to people to take part in community events like gardening, including how to get an interpreter.
- Promote and support active travel.

Improving health and wellbeing is the responsibility of both the Council and the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board (EIJB). The EIJB through the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership will support BSL users through its strategic planning and commissioned services.

5. Celebrating BSL Culture

	BSL will be recognised and celebrated as a language and a rich culture, and for BSL users to have full access to the cultural life of Edinburgh with equal opportunities to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts.
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Culture can improve the life chances of all people at every stage in their life. Our actions focus on supporting access, participation and opportunities for careers in the cultural and creative sectors.

Action areas

- Work with sector partners on initiatives to increase diversity, inclusion and equalities, in line with our Culture Strategy.
- Continue to support professional pathways for BSL users to consider careers in culture, through volunteering opportunities, career talks or internships.
- Continue to run deaf awareness staff training sessions.

- Look for opportunities to highlight BSL and Deaf culture in our collections, and to actively seek to collect material that reflects BSL and Deaf culture in Edinburgh to add to our collections.
- Explore options and costs for hand-held tablets which can be used in the Council's museums to access a BSL tour.
- Explore options and costs for making Council museum events available to BSL users (e.g. films with BSL added).
- Engage with BSL users to consider the most appropriate fire alerts in Council venues.

6. Transport

	<p>BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport, and the systems that support transport across the city.</p>
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Access to, and confidence in public transport is important for everyone who uses it. BSL users, particularly those who are deaf and deafblind, should have access to the right information at the right time in order to make public transport more accessible for them.

Action areas

- Liaise with the newly established Accessibility Commission for Edinburgh to ensure that BSL users have the opportunity to contribute their views, knowledge and experience to support Council plans and activities to deliver accessible public streets and spaces.
- Engage with BSL users to extend BSL communication about public transport, for example, by using digital screens on buses and in bus shelters to welcome people to Edinburgh in BSL and point them to where they can get help.
- Explore options for including screens which give instructions in BSL at payment points for trams.

7. Access to Justice



BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland. We would clarify that this would include BSL users as perpetrator, witness or victim.

For BSL users to participate in the justice system, they need to have ready access to BSL/English interpretation support to ensure that they understand the process from the point of arrest onwards. A range of organisations have a role to play in contributing to this, including Police Scotland, Scottish Court and Tribunal Services and the Scottish Prison Service. The actions below relate to Justice Social Work Services.

Actions areas

- Explore what additional information and support interpreters might need around Edinburgh Justice Social Work Services.
- Review information about Edinburgh Justice Social Work Services to ensure that it is accessible to BSL users.
- Ensure that Justice Social Work Services colleagues know how to book interpreters when people using our services require an interpreter.

8. Democratic Participation



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


People should be involved in and able to influence decisions that affect them, so that public services can be effective in improving their lives.

Action areas

- **Ensuring people can vote:** improve the information and support that BSL users might need to vote from the point of registering to vote, receiving and completing a postal vote right through to attending a polling station to vote.
- **Support BSL users as candidates, agents and other stakeholders** and ensure that nomination packs signpost candidates towards the financial support available via Inclusion Scotland's Access to Elected Office Fund.
- If elected, support BSL users through our normal HR support processes and through the Access to Work initiative from the DWP.

- Ensure that all staff involved in elections are trained and familiar with the support measures available and can advise or signpost the voter, supporting organisation, or carer, as appropriate to need.
- Explore opportunities for politicians to speak to members of the BSL community e.g. through “open table” meetings hosted by the Council Leader.

9. Delivering our plan

	<p>We will collaborate with BSL users and partner organisations to deliver our plan effectively and make real improvements for BSL users in the city.</p>
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We will continue to review, revise and refine this plan over its lifespan in collaboration with BSL users and other key stakeholders.

Action areas

- Developing engagement and collaboration:
 - With BSL users, including children, young people and their families to respond to their needs and aspirations, and to find out what is working.
 - With NHS Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils, to share approaches, learning and resources, improving experiences and outcomes for BSL users across the Lothian area.
- We will work with the BSL community, colleagues through the Council’s staff networks, and partner organisations to take a learning approach, identifying and adopting best practice.
- Identify key data needed across the Council to support the monitoring and delivery of the plan.

There are two important early actions for us to take in delivering the plan. The first is for us to develop ways to collaborate with BSL users to help to prioritise and shape the actions into an implementation plan, and to consider how the plan will be reviewed and refreshed over the six year period.

The second will be to collaborate with colleagues in NHS Lothian and the other three Lothian local authorities on implementing our plans, looking for opportunities to share learning, resources, and approaches.

The work will be taken forward by:

- An officers group, chaired by a Lead Policy Officer, with representatives from all relevant service areas – this will meet twice a year to share progress across the life of the plan.
- Two working groups, which will develop detailed implementation plans and monitor progress with delivery:
 - Accessibility, chaired by the Communications Manager, with representatives from relevant service areas.

- Children, Young People and their Families, chaired by the Head of Education (Inclusion), with representatives from relevant service areas.
- Managers from the relevant service areas will be responsible for developing and monitoring actions, covering the remaining themes.

These groups and managers will develop detailed implementation plans by the end of September 2024.

Progress will be reported to the Elected Members Equalities Group and to Policy and Sustainability Committee on an annual basis. We will review and revise the plan throughout its lifespan, through ongoing engagement with key BSL stakeholders, so that it is as effective as possible, and can adapt to developments and challenges as they emerge.