

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10 am, Tuesday, 11 March 2025

## British Sign Language Implementation Plan for 2025-2030

Executive  
Wards: all

### 1. Recommendations

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1.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- 1.1.1 Note that, following consideration by this committee in May 2024 and October 2024, a detailed implementation plan was drafted as the basis of a further period of stakeholder engagement to inform the final version of the British Sign Language (BSL) plan.
- 1.1.2 Approve the revised BSL plan and the implementation plan for publication on the Council's website.
- 1.1.3 Approve the allocation of council budget of £116,153 annually to support delivery of the plan.
- 1.1.4 Note that progress will be reported to the Elected Members Equalities Group and to Policy and Sustainability Committee on a bi-annual basis in alignment with reporting on wider equalities duties.

**Paul Lawrence**

Chief Executive

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## British Sign Language Implementation Plan for 2025-2030 – Draft for Consultation

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 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 2025-2030.
- 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, able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.
- 2.3 The implementation plan has been informed by stakeholder engagement, which also informed proposals for £116,153 of additional recurring funding.
- 2.4 The final BSL plan along with the implementation plan are attached as appendices one and two for approval, and subsequent publication on the Council's website, once it has been translated into BSL.

### 3. Background

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- 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 published 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. The legislation requires that, following publication of the national plan, local authorities and other public bodies have six months to publish their next BSL plans.
- 3.4 The City of Edinburgh Council's second BSL plan covers the period 2025-2030. It sets a vision, aims and high-level actions under nine themes aligned to those in the National Plan for 2023-2029.

- 3.5 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:
- 3.5.1 Improve awareness of BSL among managers and staff
  - 3.5.2 Improve accessibility to services for BSL users
  - 3.5.3 Improve communications to BSL users
- 3.6 Building on these actions, an initial draft of the plan was developed using the themes set out in the [National BSL Plan](#), and the feedback received during the [Scottish Government's extensive consultation](#).
- 3.7 This initial draft was used as the basis of consultation and engagement with BSL users and other stakeholders in Edinburgh, carried out between 4 March and 5 May 2024, including:
- 3.7.1 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
  - 3.7.2 One online consultation event featuring five BSL stakeholders, and
  - 3.7.3 Wider public consultation through the Council's online Consultation Hub.
- 3.8 The feedback from this engagement was used to further develop the initial draft, which was discussed by the Elected Members Equalities Working Group on 2 May 2024 and by the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 28 May 2024. At this meeting, the Committee also heard a deputation of parents of BSL users and a representative from the National Deaf Children's Society, who shared their concerns about the proposals in the draft plan, and about BSL provision for young people.
- 3.9 Members of the Policy and Sustainability Committee asked for further work to be done to develop an implementation plan, prior to approval of the BSL plan and the Convenor met with the members of the deputation, along with the Executive Director of Education on 4 June, to discuss their concerns in more detail.
- 3.10 The draft report and plan were presented for discussion at the Education, Children and Families committee on 11 June 2024.
- 3.11 These discussions informed the development of a draft implementation plan which was used as the basis of engagement with key stakeholders.

## **4. Main report**

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- 4.1 Engagement on the draft implementation plan was carried out in accordance with best practice guidance as set out in the Council's Consultation Policy and included:
- 4.1.1 An invitation for key organisations – including Deaf Action, British Deaf Association and the National Deaf Children's Society – to provide comment and input into the implementation plan

- 4.1.2 Two evening stakeholder engagement sessions were held - one online and one in person. These sessions were promoted through established council and partner networks. These were attended by seven stakeholders, including three parents of BSL-using young people.
- 4.1.3 Views on the draft implementation plan were also sought via the Council's Consultation Hub over a six-week period.
- 4.2 Participants' feedback confirmed that the challenges and priorities and actions set out in the plan are appropriate. It highlighted a further challenge relating to BSL courses for parents in terms of the cost and relevance to supporting day to day family life.
- 4.3 The engagement feedback informed development of proposals for additional recurring annual funding of £116,153 to support the following priority areas:
  - 4.3.1 Increasing access to BSL interpreters by part-funding an additional BSL interpreter who would be employed by NHS Lothian
  - 4.3.2 Increasing the capacity of the Council's Deaf Support team
  - 4.3.3 BSL courses for staff and parents
  - 4.3.4 Additional provision of staff BSL awareness courses
- 4.4 A number of actions set out in the plan are already underway. These include meeting with colleagues in NHS Lothian and the other three Lothian local authorities to identify opportunities to share learning, resources, and approaches.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Subject to approval by committee, the draft BSL plan for 2025-2030 will be translated into BSL and published in English and BSL on the Council's website.
- 5.2 Working groups will be established to oversee delivery of the implementation plan and to support the monitoring and reporting process.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 To effectively deliver this work, it is recommended that members approve funding on an annual basis to deliver:
  - 6.1.1 £30k for increased access to BSL interpreters by part-funding an additional BSL interpreter who would be employed by NHS Lothian
  - 6.1.2 £49,853 for additional capacity in the Deaf Support Team
  - 6.1.3 £31,800k for BSL courses for staff and parents
  - 6.1.4 and £4.5k for additional provision of staff BSL awareness courses.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1 An IIA was undertaken of the revised BSL plan and the implementation plan.
- 7.2 Positive impacts for BSL users include: increased opportunities to access employment, education and learning, support and advice, and culture; 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**

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- 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**

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- 9.1 The Council's British Sign Language Plan for 2025-2030 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 initial plan responded to feedback from consultation at national and local level and was further developed in response to the second round of engagement on the draft implementation plan.
- 9.3 As noted in the report to committee in May 2024, the Scottish Government published its second national BSL plan covering 2023-2029 in November 2023 and there was a statutory requirement for the Council to publish its second British Sign Language (BSL) Plan by May 2024. However, the further period of development of the plan has enabled the Council to deliver a more robust and detailed plan, informed and supported by two phases of stakeholder engagement, with the intention of ensuring that it will be more effective in meeting the needs of BSL users.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1 [The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for 2024-2030 \(draft for May 2024 committee\)](#)
- 10.2 [The City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership British Sign Language Plan for Edinburgh, 2018-2024](#)
- 10.3 [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2023-2029](#)
- 10.4 [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2023-2029: consultation analysis](#)

## 11. Appendices

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[The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for Edinburgh, 2025-2030](#)

[The City of Edinburgh Council British Sign Language Plan for Edinburgh, 2025-2030 – Implementation Plan](#)

A nighttime photograph of a street in Edinburgh, Scotland. The most prominent feature is the tall, dark spire of St Giles' Cathedral, which is topped with a cross. The street is lined with multi-story buildings, some of which are illuminated with warm yellow lights. In the distance, the Edinburgh City Hall is visible, lit up with a vibrant pink light. The sky is a deep, clear blue. The overall scene is a mix of historical architecture and modern city lighting.

# DRAFT BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN

2025-30

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## Executive Summary

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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 2025-2030. 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

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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 Jane Meagher, Leader of the Council

Paul Lawrence, Chief Executive

# Introduction

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## 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.

Following this, the City of Edinburgh Council's new plan will cover the period 2025-2030. 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 aims, objectives, and action areas needed to meet the needs of BSL users in Edinburgh. A detailed implementation plan for the delivery of these actions has been developed, responding to the feedback from BSL users, and will be reviewed 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 2025-2030 aligns with the Scottish Government's [British Sign Language \(BSL\): National Plan for 2023-2029](#). Add UNHRC (articles 23, 26, 30)

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 April 2026 onwards.

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. The 2022 Census shows us that there were 202 people in Edinburgh whose main language was signed, including BSL, and that there are 20 pupils in Council schools who use BSL. 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

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Our BSL plan 2025-2030 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.
- A playlist has been created on the Council's online learning hub to include new and existing resources, which will be updated when relevant resources have been identified.

### 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 2025-2030

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We developed a first draft of our plan for 2025-2030 using the themes of the ambitions set out in the National Plan<sup>1</sup>, and the feedback received during the extensive consultation<sup>2</sup> carried out by the Scottish Government in development of that Plan – including an online consultation, which received 80 responses, and 43 community events across Scotland.

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.

A second period of engagement was held in November – December 2024 to support the development of the implementation plan, using the Council's Consultation Hub, engagement sessions and invitations to key organisations including Deaf Action, British Deaf Association and the National Deaf Children's Society to provide comments and suggestions.

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.<sup>3</sup>
- 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?”*
- The cost and suitability of BSL courses for parents of deaf children.
- Behaviours which do not feel respectful because people lack awareness of BSL.

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

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

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



- Front line Council staff who don't know how to have good conversations with BSL users and ask meaningful questions.
- 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.

The feedback from the engagement activities was used to develop the final version of our BSL plan and implementation plan for 2025-2030.

# The Council's BSL Plan for 2025-30

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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.

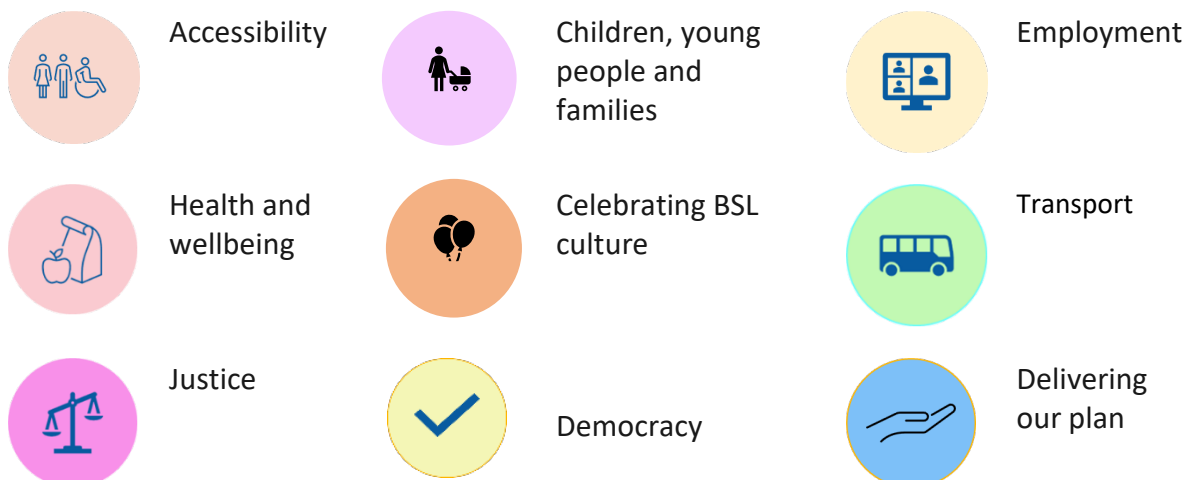
## Principles

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

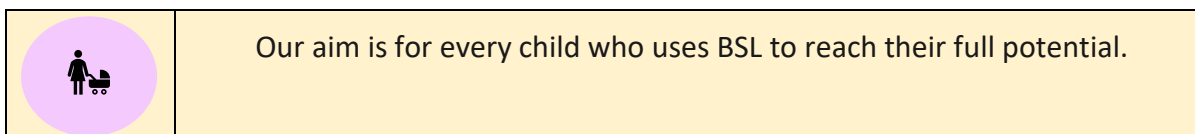
	BSL users will have access to the right information at the right time so that they can take full advantage of opportunities for learning, work and leisure, and get any help or advice that they need.
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BSL users can face barriers and exclusion through 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**
- **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**
- **Explore the extension into further frontline services** of the [WelcoME application](#) which allows service users to request support, including BSL interpreters, in advance of attending offices.
- 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.

## 2. Children, Young People and their Families

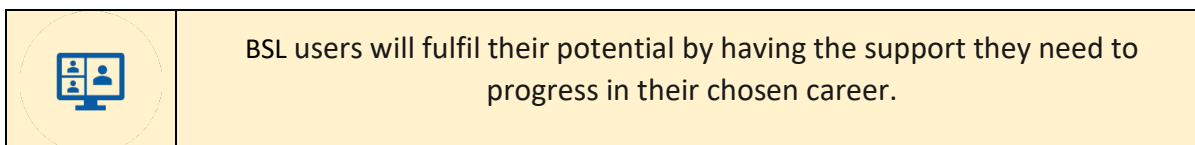


In this section, our aims and actions extend to include all children who use BSL. The actions include mainstream and special education. We are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all learners, and we will continue to work towards this goal.

### Action areas

- **Strengthen partnerships** between organisations to make sure that BSL users have the support they need at all stages of their learning.
- Develop the **support and resources available to parents** of deaf and deafblind children including those who use BSL.
- Ensure that **staff are appropriately qualified, skilled and knowledgeable** to support BSL users effectively
- Strengthen post school destinations for young people who are deaf, deafblind and users of BSL.

## 3. Access to Employment




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.

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

- 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



BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport, and the systems that support transport across the city.

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**

- Meaningful engagement will be undertaken to **support the design of public streets and spaces**, taking account of the communication needs of BSL users.
- 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:
  - o With BSL users, including children, young people and their families to respond to their needs and aspirations, and to find out what is working.
  - o 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.
- 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:
  - o Accessibility, chaired by the Communications Manager, with representatives from relevant service areas.
  - o 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.

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.

# The City of Edinburgh Council



## British Sign Language Plan

2024-30


### APPENDIX 2 DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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## 1. BSL Accessibility

	<p>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.</p>		
Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
<p><b>1. Improve awareness and access to BSL/English interpretation</b> via the <a href="#">WelcoMe application</a> through consideration of SignPort which is being developed by the Scottish Government and through updated information on the Council’s Interpretation and Translation Service.</p>	<p>Pending Scottish Government launch and SignPort being established as social enterprise and implementation to enable commercial agreements to be set up.</p>	<p>To be determined when operational requirements are known. Will include oversight/management of Council use and potential budget implications.</p>	<p>Customer Contact Team Manager Customer Services</p>
	<p><b>Updated information on ITS</b> – particularly on website and link with development of BSL information section on website.</p> <p>Phase one by <b>30 June 2025</b></p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Customer Contact Team Manager Customer Services</p>
<p><b>2. Explore the Council’s approach to signposting</b> how to request information in BSL, as well as other languages and formats e.g. placement in documents</p>	<p>Action under the Council’s Equalities Interim Outcome 2025-26 to improve inclusive communications with a focus on tools, support and guidance for service areas to ensure accessible communication with external customers.</p>	<p>Within existing staffing resources and reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26 (additional interpreter capacity).</p>	<p>Senior Policy and Insight Officer and Lead Officer – Equalities, Policy and Insight</p>

Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
	By March 2026 - Inclusive communications Guidance		
	<b>By end March 2025:</b> Explore and cost production of BSL video to explain use <u>consultation hub</u>	BSL video production, reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26 (additional interpreter capacity).	Senior Policy & Insight Officer, Policy and Insight
<b>3. Improve the availability and quality of information about services</b> , especially through BSL videos, alternative options for contacting the Council, and increase awareness through promotion.	<b>Available on website by 30 June 2025:</b> BSL videos produced and available on website covering most frequently used online services/information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Badge Parking</li> <li>• Council Tax Explained</li> <li>• Housing Benefits</li> <li>• School Grants</li> <li>• EMA</li> <li>• Parking Permits</li> <li>• Crisis Grants</li> </ul>	Within existing resources	Customer Contact Team Manager, Customer Services  Supported by Web ICT Lead (Development), ICT/Digital Services
	<b>By 30 June 2025</b> (NB dependent on top task BSL videos): Explore best practice of BSL on website; consideration of a BSL section on the Council's website	Within existing resources	Web ICT Lead (Development), ICT/Digital Services


Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
	including top task BSL videos; set out action plan		
	<b>Ongoing to 2030:</b> continue to identify opportunities to improve online content for BSL users across all Council managed websites including the main website, venue websites, visitor destination, and where possible on partnership websites such as employment/apprenticeship.	BSL video production, reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26 (additional interpreter capacity).	Services areas
<p><b>4. Improve the accessibility of information and support needed to vote</b> 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 places.</p>	<p>UK General Election 4 July 2024: inclusion of Electoral Commission BSL videos and links to information in BSL and other formats on website. Promotion of assistance and support available in polling places – <a href="#">information on website</a> and in social media.</p> <p>This activity will continue for future elections through life of of this BSL plan.</p>		Elections & Members Services Manager
<p>5. Explore the extension into further frontline services of the <a href="#">WelcoMe application</a> which allows service users to request support, including BSL interpreters, in advance of</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b> Currently available in Council locality offices, the registrar’s office and the City Chambers.</p>	<p>Withing existing resources  Reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26</p>	Customer Contact Team Manager, Customer Services

Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
attending offices. Currently in use in seven city-wide offices.		(additional interpreter capacity).	
6. Continue to provide and promote <b>BSL and deaf awareness sessions</b> available to colleagues through the online learning hub and other internal channels, and to members of the public via the Adult Learning Programme.	Continue to provide and promote <b>BSL and deaf awareness sessions</b> available to colleagues through the online learning hub and other internal channels in person and to members of the public via the Adult Education Programme; Wider Achievement Development Officer continues to liaise with learning hub colleagues		Wider Achievement Manager, (CLD - Adult and Family Learning) Children, Education and Justice Services  Wider Achievement Development Officer, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programmes
7. Improve support and access to information for <b>deaf colleagues who use BSL</b> .	<b>During 2025-2026</b> , work with SPARC, the Council's internal network for colleagues with disabilities and long-term health conditions, and with deaf colleagues to understand how we can best support them. Agree and implement actions as appropriate.	Within existing resources	HR Consultant - Organisational Development, HR Services
8. Identify opportunities to signpost appropriate BSL and deaf awareness to colleagues and to our wider external audiences including service users. Use opportunities such as Deaf Awareness Week as notable dates to promote deaf awareness both internally and externally.	Internal promotion of events including (examples): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deaf Awareness week (May 2025)</li> </ul>	Within existing resources	All services supported by HR and Communications

Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
9. The Lifelong Learning service will investigate ways to create BSL translations for all the information published by Lifelong Learning.	<p><b>By 30 June 2025</b></p> <p>Scope out improvements to website and other support information to incorporate BSL information and signposting to support resources</p> <p>Implementation of phase 1 improvements – April-Dec 2025</p>	<p>Within existing staffing resources.</p> <p>BSL video production, reflected in budget bid (additional interpreter capacity) .</p>	<p>Wider Achievement Manager, (CLD - Adult and Family Learning) Children, Education and Justice Services</p> <p>Wider Achievement Development Officer, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programmes</p>
10. Continue to review social media and other guidance on good practice communications, incorporating BSL guidance.	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><a href="#">Multimedia accessibility guidance</a> on Council's intranet; continue development alongside the inclusive communications activity under Diversity Framework development.</p>	<p>Within existing staffing resources.</p>	<p>Web ICT Lead (Dev), ICT/Digital Services</p> <p>Communications Manager, Communications Services</p>
11. In the next development of the online committee reporting application, take cognisance of accessibility, including the needs of BSL users, where possible.	<p>Scoping and monitoring potential software solutions (some of which are still in testing/development); procurement – by 2026/2027.</p> <p>In the interim, explore opportunities to augment existing system wherever feasible</p>	<p>Within existing staffing resources.</p> <p>Budget requirement for software not yet known.</p>	<p>Head of Democracy, Governance &amp; Resilience, Corporate Services</p>



## 2. Children, Young People and their Families

	<p>Our aim is for every child who uses BSL to reach their full potential.</p>
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In this section, our aims and actions extend to include all children who use BSL. 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	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
<p><b>1. Strengthen partnerships</b> with NHS Lothian colleagues in audiology and speech and language therapy to ensure that deaf and deafblind children are identified early and the GIRFEC framework is used to assess and access the information and support they require.</p>	<p><b>By March 2025:</b> a multi-agency pathway will be in place with NHS Lothian colleagues for the early identification of deaf and deafblind children and for their education support needs to be assessed using GIRFEC framework</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Head of Education (Inclusion)</p>
	<p><b>By March 2025:</b> partnerships will be in place with national organisations such as the National Deaf Children’s Society and Deaf Action to strengthen pathways and support for deaf and deafblind children and their families</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Head of Education (Inclusion)</p>


Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
<p>2. Develop the <b>support and resources available to parents</b> of deaf and deafblind children who use BSL.</p>	<p><b>a) By December 2024:</b> Completed audit of needs and existing resources and support available to parents deaf and deafblind children to identify gaps in provision</p> <p><b>b) By March 2025:</b> Extend options to support the parents of BSL using children and young people so that they can develop sufficient BSL to support their child. Work will be undertaken during 2025-2026 to develop a bespoke course to meet the needs of staff and parents who support deaf BSL using children and young people.</p> <p><b>c) By December 2025:</b> Completed review of provision of support for parents who are BSL users to ensure they have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child’s education.</p>	Working Group to determine	Head of Education (Inclusion)
	<p><b>d) By March 2025:</b> A multi-agency pathway will be in place to provide post diagnosis follow up for deaf and deafblind children and their families which will include ongoing</p>	Working Group to determine	Head of Education (Inclusion)

Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
	support and resources to develop their BSL skills.		
	<p><b>e) By March 2025:</b> All deaf and deafblind children and young people who use BSL will have a Child's Plan and annual review and annual review that details their hearing and communication needs and ensure all adults working with them understand their communication needs.</p>	Deaf Support Team – within existing resources	Service Manager Deaf Support Team
<p>3. Ensure that <b>colleagues are appropriately qualified, skilled and knowledgeable</b> to support BSL users effectively</p>	<p><b>a) By December 2025:</b> colleagues across the workforce will have access to appropriate professional learning opportunities so that they understand the needs of deaf and deafblind children and young people using BSL. Training will be informed by the needs of the individual children and underpinned by a consistent approach to Deaf/BSL awareness.</p> <p><b>b) By March 2025:</b> We will have developed and extended professional learning opportunities for staff across all sectors to increase awareness and knowledge of the</p>	Deaf Support Team and Quality Improvement Team – within existing resources	<p>a) Head of Education (Inclusion)</p> <p>Service Manager Deaf Support Team</p> <p>Quality Improvement Officer 2+1</p>

Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
	<p>strategies required to support deaf and deafblind children and their families.</p> <p><b>c) By March 2026:</b> We will regularly promote the benefits of learning BSL to schools and offer training for staff and pupils to learn and become more confident in using the language.</p> <p><b>d) By December 2025:</b> We will have supported opportunities for education staff including early years staff to learn BSL up to the level of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6.</p> <p><b>e) By March 2026:</b> We will have increased 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.</p> <p><b>f) By December 2025:</b> We will have increased capacity of the Deaf Support Team to meet the needs of deaf and deafblind children including those with additional complex needs. <del>Staff</del> Colleagues</p>		


Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area; Lead Officer
	will have appropriate level of BSL for their role.		
4. Strengthen post school destinations for young people who are deaf, deafblind and users of BSL.	<p><b>a) By March 2025:</b> We will have worked with Skills Development Scotland to strengthen and support the transition from school for BSL learners.</p> <p><b>b) By December 2025:</b> We will have established systems to gather data about deaf, deafblind and BSL users in post school destinations.</p>		<p>Head of Education (Inclusion)</p> <p>Skills Development Scotland</p>

### 3. Access to Employment

	BSL users will fulfil their potential by having the support they need to progress in their chosen career.		
Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area Lead Officer
<p>1. 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.</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> information about the support available across the employability network will be presented in BSL format on the Edinburgh Guarantee website. Continued funding of the <b>All in Edinburgh</b> consortium which provides specialist support for disabled people or those with a long term health condition</p> <p><b>By June 2025:</b> interpretation services will be promoted on the website for accessing services.</p>	<p>Financial implication of video creation reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26 (additional interpreter capacity).</p> <p>Commitment of ongoing council core funding for this service.</p>	<p>Head of Business Growth &amp; Inclusion, Business Growth &amp; Inclusion</p>
<p>2. Ensure Edinburgh Guarantee employability support and information is promoted across the city and provided in BSL format where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> As part of the wider Edinburgh Guarantee rebranding and marketing campaign, information of support available across the employability network will be presented in BSL format on the Edinburgh Guarantee website.</p> <p><b>By June 2025:</b></p>	<p>Financial implication of video creation reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26 (additional interpreter capacity).</p>	<p>Head of Business Growth &amp; Inclusion, Business Growth &amp; Inclusion</p>

	Interpretation services will be promoted on the website for accessing services.		
3. 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.	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> Officers conducting employer engagement will be knowledgeable of how to support employers, including signposting to specialist services and employability providers, to advise employers how to support BSL users.</p>	None	Head of Business Growth & Inclusion, Business Growth & Inclusion
4. 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.	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> Information regarding Access to Work will be published in written and BSL format on the Edinburgh Guarantee and City of Edinburgh Council websites.</p> <p><b>By June 2025:</b> Officers conducting employer engagement will be knowledgeable of the Access to Work scheme and will provide printed materials to employers and service users, and signpost to Edinburgh Guarantee and City of Edinburgh Council websites for BSL interpretations.</p>	Financial implication of video creation reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26 (additional interpreter capacity).	Head of Business Growth & Inclusion, Business Growth & Inclusion


## 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.			
Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area Lead Officer
1. 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.  2. Continue work to address social isolation and loneliness.	<b>By 30 June 2025</b> a) Improved information about Wider Achievement and Lifelong services on Council's webpage. b) Monthly group for BSL users who have additional support needs in place c) Planning underway for a new mainstream summer learning programme 2025, ensuring that deaf and BSL users can take part Community Based Adult Learning Team d) Summer 2024 programme learners included e) New hearing loss group set up f) Specialised courses programme delivered regularly	All within existing resources	Wider Achievement Manager, (CLD - Adult and Family Learning) Children, Education and Justice Services  Wider Achievement Development Officer, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programmes




	<p>g) ESOL provision for deaf sign language users in mainstream programme.</p> <p><b>By 2030</b></p> <p>h) Opportunities to employ a Deaf Youth leader explored and business case developed as appropriate</p>		
<p>3. Provide information on the support available to people to take part in community events, including how to request for an interpreter or alternative communication support for community events and courses</p>	<p><b>By 30 June 2025</b></p> <p>Information on our website has been improved so that people know what support is available and how to arrange it</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Wider Achievement Manager, (CLD - Adult and Family Learning) Children, Education and Justice Services</p> <p>Wider Achievement Development Officer, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programmes</p>

## 5. Celebrating BSL Culture

	<p>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.</p>		
Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area Lead Officer
<p>1. Continue to support professional pathways for BSL users to consider careers in culture, through volunteering opportunities, career talks or internships.</p>	<p><b>By March 2026:</b> Create a short film on museum and heritage careers with BSL interpretation</p> <p><b>By January 2026:</b> Explore opportunities for developing a volunteer role for BSL users by Jan 2026</p>	<p>Financial implication of video creation reflected in proposals for budget 2025-26 (additional interpreter capacity).</p> <p>Training / participant expenses/ promotion To be met within existing budget</p>	<p>Outreach &amp; Access Manager, Museums &amp; Galleries, Place</p> <p>Outreach &amp; Access Manager, Museums &amp; Galleries, Place</p>
<p>2. Continue to run deaf awareness training sessions for colleagues who work in Museums and Galleries colleagues.</p>	<p><b>By December 2025:</b> Museums colleagues will take part in deaf awareness training</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Learning &amp; Public Programmes Manager, Museums &amp; Galleries, Place</p>
<p>3. 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.</p>	<p>Ongoing core curatorial activity delivered through exhibition programming and collecting activity</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Curatorial Team, Museums &amp; Galleries, Place</p>


<p>4. Explore options and costs for hand-held tablets which can be used in the Council's museums to access a BSL tour.</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> install QR codes at the Museum of Edinburgh in an exhibition in the spring of 2025 on a trial basis.</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Learning &amp; Public Programmes Manager, Museums &amp; Galleries, Place</p>
<p>5. Explore options and costs for making Council museum events available to BSL users (e.g. films with BSL added).</p>	<p><b>a) April 2025:</b> produce BSL x 10 short films for Nature Nurture exhibition at Museum of Edinburgh interpreting 10 key objects in BSL with QR codes in exhibition</p> <p><b>b) March 2025:</b> Digital BSL Tour highlighting 20 key objects for Edinburgh 900</p> <p><b>c)</b> Continue to explore funding opportunities for BSL films and in-venue tours</p>	<p>Within existing resources and See Hear funding</p>	<p>Learning &amp; Public Programmes Manager, Museums &amp; Galleries, Place</p>
<p>6. Engage with BSL users to consider the most appropriate fire alerts in Council museums venues.</p>	<p><b>By December 2025:</b> Development of new access audits and venue specific guidance as part of planned departmental Access Plan refresh</p>	<p>Resource requirements will be established as part of the audit process.</p>	<p>Outreach &amp; Access Manager, Museums &amp; Galleries, Place</p>

## 6. Transport


	BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport, and the systems that support transport across the city.		
Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area Lead Officer
<p>1. Meaningful engagement will be undertaken to support the design of public streets and spaces, taking account of the communication needs of BSL users.</p> <p>In communicating about the city’s public streets and spaces, we will make sure the Council selects the appropriate accessible formats and channels to communicate with disabled people (e.g. Easy Read, BSL) informed by Integrated Impact Assessments.</p>	<p><b>By March 2026:</b> The Accessibility Commission will ensure that they embed the council’s Inclusive Communications guidance (under development in 2025-26) to workplan.</p>	<p>Within existing resources for year 1.</p>	<p>Placemaking &amp; Mobility Strategy &amp; Development Manager, Place</p>
<p>2. 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.</p> <p>Context:</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> restart pilot of live signage re departures on digital screens (bus stops and in bus stations)</p> <p>To date, we’ve engaged with <b>Signapse AI</b> (a company promoted by bus tracker contractors) to develop and test signage</p>	<p>Staffing - within existing resources</p> <p>Costs of BSL signage and pilot being established as part of the pilot.</p>	<p>Transport Officer, Place</p>

Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area Lead Officer
There are currently 322 locations in the city with bus trackers (digital screens) and this will increase to 430, covering 20% of shelters in Edinburgh	re departures on screen; trial on Princes Street and in the bus station pending	These costs will be used to inform proposals e.g. for 2026-07 Council budget	
3. Explore options for including screens which give instructions in BSL at payment points for trams.	<b>March 2026</b> This has been explored and is not possible with existing ticket machines. This will be reviewed when the screens are replaced.	Staffing - within existing resources	Transport Officer, Place

## 7. Access to Justice

	<p>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.</p>		
Action	Milestones with dates Phase 1: 2024-2026	Resource implications	Lead Service Area Lead Officer
<p>1. Explore what additional information and support interpreters might need around Edinburgh Justice Social Work Services.</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial meeting held with Interpretation Services to discuss what information and support interpreters might need</li> <li>Develop support plan for interpreters</li> </ol> <p><b>By March 2026:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery in place</li> </ol>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Sector Manager, Justice Services</p>
<p>2. Review information about Edinburgh Justice Social Work Services to ensure that it is accessible to BSL users.</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> we will have established the formats need to ensure that our information is accessible to BSL users and how we can timeously respond to requests for information about Edinburgh Justice Social Work Services, in the required format</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Sector Manager, Justice Services</p>
<p>3. Ensure that Justice Social Work Services colleagues know how to book interpreters when people using our services require an interpreter.</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b> regular communications will be sent to colleagues in the service so that they are aware of what they are required to do to book interpreters.</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Sector Manager, Justice Services</p>


## 8. Democratic Participation

	<p>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.</p>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones with dates</b> <b>Phase 1: 2024-2026</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>	<b>Lead Service Area</b> <b>Lead Officer</b>
<p>1. Develop a page on elections on the Council’s website which will provide a comprehensive overview of the support available for people to vote including providing links to information or video material about ‘what will happen at the polling station’ on your website, as printed material provided to relevant groups or at the polling station for reference (including the requirement to show photo ID when it applies) <a href="#">including in British Sign Language</a> (YouTube)</p>	<p><b>By June 2025:</b>  Review current pages and develop further content (Accessibility at polling stations);  Commission a video re BSL</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Elections &amp; Members Services Manager</p>
<p><b>2. Ensuring people can vote:</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>During mid 2025:</b>  Engage with disability groups mid 2025 to prepare for 2026 Scottish Parliament elections</p>	<p>The Electoral Commission provide information for our websites covering registration to vote and how to vote using BSL videos provided by the</p>	<p>Elections &amp; Members Services Manager</p>

<p><b>3. Support BSL users as candidates, agents and other stakeholders</b> and ensure that nomination packs signpost candidates towards the financial support available via Inclusion Scotland's Access to Elected Office Fund.</p>	<p><b>By end November 2025</b> Ahead of 2026 elections</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Elections &amp; Members Services Manager</p>
<p><b>4. Support Elected Members who are BSL users</b> through our normal HR support processes and through the Access to Work initiative from the DWP.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> as detailed in the Elected Members Handbook, processes are in place re support available (reasonable adjustments, additional support and access to work scheme funded by DWP)</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Democratic Services Manager</p>
<p>5. Ensure that <b>all staff involved in elections</b> are trained and familiar with the support measures available and can advise or signpost the voter, supporting organisation, or carer, as appropriate to need.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> staff training is provided for staff involved in the election available via video (LD, sight loss)</p> <p><b>By June 2025:</b> Commission a video re BSL</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Elections &amp; Members Services Manager</p>
<p>6. Explore opportunities for politicians to speak to members of the BSL community e.g. through "open table" meetings hosted by the Council Leader.</p>	<p><b>By December 2025:</b> arrange the first meeting with Elected Members, and agree approach to future meeting re frequency etc</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Lead Officer – Equalities, Policy and Insight</p>
<p>7. Arrange for BSL interpreters to be present to interpret election results.</p>	<p><b>Underway.</b></p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Elections &amp; Members Services Manager</p>



## 9. Delivering our plan

	We will collaborate with BSL users and partner organisations to deliver our plan effectively and make real improvements for BSL users in the city.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones with dates</b> <b>Phase 1: 2024-2026</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>	<b>Lead Service Area</b> <b>Lead Officer</b>
1. We will work with the BSL community, colleagues through the Council’s colleague networks, and partner organisations to take a learning approach, identifying and adopting best practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With BSL users, including children, young people and their families to respond to their needs and aspirations, and to find out what is working.</li> <li>- 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.</li> </ul>	<b>By September 2025</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify any existing groups (e.g. parent engagement group, colleagues groups) and scope options for engagement and collaboration, aligned with the development of the Council’s Equality and Diversity Framework</li> <li>- Meet with colleagues across Lothian to agree how to work collaboratively, including opportunities for joint collaboration with BSL users</li> </ul>	Within existing resources	Lead Officers –Policy and Insight  HR Consultant - Organisational Development, HR Services
2. Identify key data needed across the Council to support the monitoring and delivery of the plan.	<b>By June 2025</b>		Lead Officers – Lead Change and Delivery Officer, Corporate Services