

**A Shared  
British Sign Language Plan  
for Lanarkshire  
2018-2024**

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BSL version of the plan see link: [BSL version of the plan](#)

## 1. Foreword

We are delighted to introduce the first British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for Lanarkshire.

We welcome the opportunities provided by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 to:-

- show our collective commitment to protecting and supporting BSL including in its tactile form
- recognise and value BSL as a language in its own right; and
- ensure the needs of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users are brought into the mainstream in our organisations

The Plan aims to make Lanarkshire a place where people, who's first or preferred language is BSL, have the same opportunities to be active healthy citizens and are able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

We want to thank the Deaf and Deafblind BSL representatives who worked with us for their valued support in the development of this Plan.

NLC Leader of the Council – Cllr James Logue

NLC Chief Executive – Des Murray

SLC Leader of the Council- Cllr John Ross

SLC Chief Executive - Lindsay Freeland

NHS Lanarkshire Chair – Neena Mahal

NHS Lanarkshire Chief Executive – Calum Campbell

## 2. Executive Summary

This BSL Action Plan builds on work already achieved through strong partnerships and outlines the actions we will take whilst maintaining the individual accountability of each organisation. We share the long-term goals for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan and aim to:-

- a. Offer D/deaf and Deafblind children and their families the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL.
- b. Support children and young people to:-
  - i. reach their full potential at every stage of their learning;
  - ii. offer parents who use BSL the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their children's education; and
  - iii. enable more pupils to learn BSL at school.
- c. Support BSL users to develop skills for work and progress in their chosen career.
- d. Make our information and services accessible to BSL users so as they can lead informed, healthy and active lives.
- e. Contribute to making our transport safe, fair and inclusive.
- f. Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals and they too can share their culture.
- g. Actively encourage BSL users to participate in community and democratic life.

### **3. Introduction**

The BSL National Plan 2017 - 2023 was published on 24 October 2017. It is framed under ten long-term goals which were co-produced with BSL users across Scotland.

This Shared BSL Plan for Lanarkshire reflects those same long-term goals. It sets out the actions we will take from 2018 – 2024 and how we will:-

- improve communication and access to services for people who use BSL in Lanarkshire; and
- promote the use of and understanding of BSL across our areas of authority.

### **4. About Us**

#### **Lanarkshire**

Situated in the heart of Scotland, Lanarkshire has the second largest populated region in Scotland with a working age population of 425,000 (and total population of 642,300) over 896 square miles. Scattered in a diverse mixture of urban, rural and isolated settlements it covers urban towns including Motherwell, Hamilton, Airdrie, Rutherglen, the new town of East Kilbride and the market town of Lanark, as well as smaller towns, villages and agricultural areas.

Ongoing social and economic changes in Lanarkshire have resulted in an ever-changing environment. Modern business ventures and increasing employment opportunities are replacing traditional heavy industries.

#### **North Lanarkshire Council**

North Lanarkshire Council is the fourth largest local authority in Scotland serving a population of approximately 339,000.

According to the last census in 2011 there were 848 active British Sign Language users living in North Lanarkshire.

#### **South Lanarkshire Council**

South Lanarkshire is the fifth largest of Scotland's Councils with a population of 303,470 (2011 census) living in an area of 700 square miles. It is a varied area, with heavily populated towns and extensive rural areas.

According to the last census in 2011 there were 722 people living in South Lanarkshire using BSL at home.

## **NHS Lanarkshire**

NHS Lanarkshire is responsible for improving the health of more than 654,490 people living within the North and South Lanarkshire local authority areas.

There are three university hospitals in the area – Hairmyres, Monklands and Wishaw. Primary health care is provided in the community and includes general practitioners (GPs), dentists, health visitors and a wide range of health professionals. NHS Lanarkshire's primary care facilities include health centres and community and day hospitals.

## **British Sign Language support in Lanarkshire**

Across our organisations we provide BSL interpretation to anyone who requires support when accessing our services or attending meetings and appointments.

In addition we aim to raise awareness for all of our employees and provide access to a number of learning opportunities including:-

- BSL training
- Sensory Impairment training and
- Deaf Culture etc.

## **5. Rationale for a Shared BSL Plan**

In Lanarkshire there is already a strong partnership approach to working between both Councils and NHS Lanarkshire. In addition the BSL community across Lanarkshire, although relatively small, is closely linked through their shared language and culture.

To ensure developing a shared BSL Plan was the best approach we brought together four local organisations who represent Deaf and Deafblind people and invited them to work with us in partnership. Those organisations are:

- Deaf Services Lanarkshire
- Lanarkshire Deaf Club
- Deafblind Scotland
- Deaf Equality Accessibility Forum (South Lanarkshire)

This partnership became Lanarkshire BSL Steering Group and it determined that by working together to develop a Lanarkshire wide BSL Plan we would:

- have the expertise of BSL users when engaging with the wider BSL community
- reduce consultation fatigue as we would be consulting with the same people
- maximise the availability of BSL interpreters and Deafblind guide communicators as this is a finite resource.
- share experiences across authorities to promote best practice; and most importantly
- put in place a BSL Plan, co-produced with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users, ensuring it is meaningful and accessible.

The BSL Steering Group also agreed that the Shared BSL Plan would be a high level Plan and that each of the three public body partners would produce its own working action plan, pertinent to its own organisation, ensuring accountability and compliance with the requirements of the Act.

## **6. Developing the Plan - consultation and engagement**

A requirement of the BSL (Scotland) Act is that the local plan should mirror the National Plan. A first task of the BSL Steering Group was to consider the ambitions and long term goals of the National Plan within a local context. Helpfully the Scottish Government produced a template for Authorities to follow. Producing a high level draft Plan was therefore a desktop exercise.

The BSL Steering Group agreed the draft Plan and from May to September 2018 developed a programme of consultation and engagement with the BSL community and other stakeholders.

- Community events were organised where BSL users could discuss the main themes of the draft Plan – Early Years, Education, Health and Social Care, Family Life and Employment and Training. These discussions were led by Deaf facilitators and in all over 100 Deaf and Deafblind BSL users participated.
- Our draft Plan was uploaded onto our websites in BSL and in English along with an on-line questionnaire and people were invited to comment. The questionnaire resulted in 20 individual comments.
- Within our own organisations we sought the views of employees who would have a part to play in ensuring the Plan is progressed.

As well as the information gathered from this programme of events we have also taken into account evidence and information gathered from work undertaken with the BSL community over the past few years including:

- Raising awareness about mental health
- Exploring BSL users experiences of accessing our services
- Raising awareness amongst our employees of the needs of BSL users
- Making our websites more accessible; and
- Working on the See Hear framework.

## **7. Next Steps**

Ensuring the BSL Plan is making a difference to the lives of BSL users in Lanarkshire requires ongoing engagement with the BSL community.

The BSL Steering group representatives have agreed that the Lanarkshire BSL Steering Group should continue, but with the purpose of monitoring and reviewing the impact the Plan is having on the lives of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users.

Furthermore the implementation of the Plan will be the subject of regular reports to our respective Council Elected and NHS Board Members.

## Our long-term goals and what we will do by 2024

### Across all our services

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

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

### By 2024, we will:

- Analyse existing evidence we have about BSL users in our organisation; identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress.
- Include a question in our equalities questionnaires/monitoring forms in relation to the use and understanding of BSL which the Scottish government is developing for the next census.
- Improve access to our information and services for BSL users including making our website more accessible to BSL users by:-
  - Including signed videos to provide information about available services.
  - Reviewing guidance on accessing interpretation and translation.
  - Using the intranet and internet to promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services contact SCOTLAND-BSL to staff and to local BSL users.
  - Increasing staff awareness, knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture, language and service provision issues; and
  - Working with local Deaf organisations to develop a programme of training and awareness raising for front-line staff

## **Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare**

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

*“The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a D/deaf or Deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL”.*

### **By 2024, we will:**

- Provide Early Year’s staff and childcare workers with access to training and awareness raising on Deaf and Deafblind BSL.
- Ensure families of D/deaf and Deafblind children have access to nationally developed BSL resources as early as possible in their child’s life.
- Ensure our children’s services have access to nationally developed BSL resources and advice within key programmes such as Bookbug.
- Work with BSL stakeholders to ensure and develop resources and information that are appropriate and relevant

## School Education

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

*“Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child’s education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school”*

### **By 2024, we will:**

- Contribute to the Scottish Government’s investigation of the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff working with D/deaf and Deafblind pupils in schools, and take account of any new guidance for teachers or support staff working with pupils who use BSL.
- Take forward advice developed by Education Scotland to a) improve the way that teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and b) ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can get further involved in their child’s education
- Contribute to the SCILT programme of work to support the learning of BSL in schools for hearing pupils as part of the 1+2 programme, including sharing best practice and guidance
- Identify potential for teachers to provide BSL Learning in Schools
- Ensure Deaf Parents have access to information in BSL. This includes Report Cards, Parents Evenings, routine information, IT apps, etc.
- Consider accessibility of School Trips, Parent Councils. Also consideration for work placements

## **Training, Work and Social Security**

We share the long-term goal for training, work and social security set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

*“BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish workforce, so that they can fulfil their potential, and improve Scotland’s economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career”*

### **By 2024, we will:**

- Signpost pupils and students to a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process
- Work with partners who deliver employment services, and with employer groups already supporting employability to help signpost them to specific advice on the needs of BSL users.
- Raise awareness locally of the UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ (AtW) scheme with employers and with BSL users (including those on Modern Apprenticeships) so that they can benefit from the support it provides.
- Track young people in partnership with Skills Development Scotland
- We will have transition plans for BSL users in place
- Work with local employment services to help highlight specific advice and guidance required by BSL users

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

We share the long-term goal for health, mental health and wellbeing set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

*“BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives, and to make informed choices at every stage of their lives”*

### **By 2024, we will:**

- Signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL (to be produced by NHS Health Scotland and NHS24), and b) develop complementary information in BSL about local provision, as appropriate.
- Work with Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership, third sector partners and the Lanarkshire BSL community to develop appropriate information in appropriate formats, signed information on the internet, provision of easy read information, etc.
- Provide Public Protection information in BSL
- Review what Mental Health support is available across the range of partner organisations.
- Ensure that psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users.
- Take steps to improve access to information about active health provision, local sports facilities and sporting opportunities.
- Consider the needs of BSL users in any local work to tackle social isolation.

## Transport

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

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

### **By 2024, we will:**

- Ensure BSL users can participate in the on-going feedback process of the ‘Going Further: Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework’ as individuals and staff.
- Research technological solutions for providing accessible information in transport hubs (for example bus stations, train stations, airports etc.) for patients and staff.
- Create guidance for passengers and staff who use BSL on how to contact local/national transport providers when things go wrong on a journey.
- Develop and provide training for transport providers which includes strategies for communicating with BSL users (patients and staff)
- Encourage private transport providers to have access to technology to support communication with BSL users and/or designated drivers and to have basic BSL awareness
- Encourage inclusion of BSL awareness within partners regulated transport services driver training, including school transport.

## Culture and the Arts

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

*“BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland”*

### **By 2024, we will:**

- Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.
- Encourage and support BSL users to consider a career in culture and the arts.
- Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on relevant websites and at venues.
- Improve access to the historical environment, cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users.
- Work in partnership with providers of cultural events and activities across Lanarkshire to increase availability of signed performances and enhance individuals’ access to engagement in cultural activities.
- Explore the use of technology to enhance the experience of BSL users when visiting exhibitions or accessing museum collections.

## Democracy

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

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

### **By 2024, we will:**

- Take opportunities to promote the Access to Elected Office Fund locally, which can meet the additional costs of BSL users wishing to stand for selection or election in local or Scottish Parliament elections
- Continue to support BSL users to participate in community engagement events
- Provide links on websites to national information on the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland) to signpost BSL users who wish to stand for selection and election
- Raise awareness among elected members about ContactScotlandBSL
- Ensure that BSL users have access to information about Elected Members/Public Appointments in BSL.

## Justice

We share the long term goal for justice set out in the BSL national plan, which is:

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

### **By 2024, we will:**

- take account of advice developed by BSL led Justice Advisory group, to support and meet the needs of BSL users

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## Contact Information

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

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British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)  
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