**BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) SCOTLAND ACT 2015:**

**A BRIEF GUIDE FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES PREPARING BSL PLANS**

This guidance has been written by the Scottish Government Equality Unit to help colleges and universities to write their own BSL plans, which must be published by October 2018.

Background

The BSL (Scotland) Act requires the following colleges and universities[[1]](#footnote-1) to publish BSL plans:

**Universities (19)**

* University of Aberdeen
* Abertay University
* University of Dundee
* University of Edinburgh
* Edinburgh Napier University
* University of Glasgow
* Glasgow Caledonian University
* Glasgow School of Art
* Heriot-Watt University
* University of the Highlands and Islands
* Open University in Scotland
* Queen Margaret University
* Robert Gordon University
* Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
* Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
* University of St Andrews
* University of Stirling
* University of Strathclyde
* University of the West of Scotland

**Further education colleges** (29)

* North East Scotland College
* Ayrshire College
* Borders College
* Dumfries and Galloway College
* Edinburgh College
* Fife College
* Forth Valley College of Further and Higher Education
* Glasgow Clyde College
* City of Glasgow College
* Glasgow Kelvin College
* Argyll College UHI
* Highland Theological College UHI
* Inverness College UHI
* Lews Castle College UHI
* Moray College UHI
* NAFC Marine Centre UHI
* Perth College UHI
* The North Highland College UHI
* Orkney College UHI
* Scottish Association for Marine Science
* Shetland College UHI
* West Highland College UHI
* New College Lanarkshire
* South Lanarkshire College
* Dundee and Angus College
* West College Scotland
* West Lothian College
* Newbattle Abbey College
* Sabhal Mor Ostaig

The BSL plans prepared by these colleges and universities must:

* Involve BSL users (including those who use the tactile form of the language) and those who represent them;
* Ensure that the consultation on the draft plan is accessible to Deaf and Deafblind BSL users; and
* Be published in BSL as well as in English in both draft form, and in final form.

Given that many colleges/universities don’t currently have students who use BSL, there are challenges to consulting in a meaningful and proportionate way, particularly within the timescales laid down in legislatin. This paper suggests a practical approach to create a college/university BSL plan and consult at a national level, and then invite colleges and universities to adopt this as their first plan, while committing to gathering on-going feedback from BSL users, and reshaping/revising the plan in light of that feedback.

What should be in college and university BSL plans?

The legislation says that BSL plans should ‘try to achieve consistency’ with the BSL National Plan <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540>. It also says that they should take account of any guidance issued by Scottish Ministers.

The BSL National Plan is framed under **ten long-term goals** which have been co-produced with BSL users across Scotland. It includes **70 actions** which we will take by 2020, which will help take us closer to these goals.

**Long-term goals**

* Colleges and universities should consider structuring their BSL plans under the same long-term goals **where they are relevant to their work.**
* This may vary from one organisation to the next, for example the goal on culture and the arts will be relevant to the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and the long-term goal around school education will be relevant to institutions which train school teachers.
* For some colleges and universities, it may only be the overarching goal on all our public services that will be relevant to the exercise of their functions.

**Actions**

* There are some actions in the national plan which **all** colleges and universities should copy or adapt in their own plans. For example [3] adopting guidelines to improve access to information and services in BSL, [5] promoting contactSCOTLAND-BSL and [6] enabling key staff to access BSL training.
* Colleges and universities should include other actions they will take to help make progress towards the relevant long-term goals. This means that their BSL plans will be tailored to their own particular circumstances, opportunities and priorities.
* Wherever possible, actions should be Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timebound (SMART).

**Colleges and universities first BSL plans (2018): Suggested approach**

**Annex A** provides a draft BSL plan which could be adopted by a college or university as their first BSL plan.

It makes sense to translate and ‘consult’ on this at a national level, since in reality many FE/HE institutions will not have a ready pool of BSL students to consult with. This would also be more efficient than separate translations of very similar plans.

The draft would then be revised following the national consultation. Colleges and universities can formally adopt/put their name to the template/model plan (which of course they can tweak/amend to meet their own circumstances) and publish by October 2018, as required by the legislation.

The Scottish Funding Council would co-ordinate the national consultation on this draft plan, with the support of Deaf Action who have been funded by the Scottish Government Equality Unit as part of the BSL (Scotland) Act Partnership, to support implementation of the Act.

Some colleges/universities have active groups of students who use BSL, and will what to use feedback from those groups to shape their BSL plan.

Some colleges/universities work closely with their local authority, and so may also participate in consultation events that the LA is running with BSL users in the local area, which they can also use to shape their own plan.

For colleges and universities who adopt this approach and use the ‘model’ plan, it is important that they include a commitment to a) take continuous feedback over the coming year/18 months after publication with a view to b) publishing a refreshed plan which includes more ‘local’ actions (based on that feedback) after the national progress report (due October 2020).

The ‘model BSL plan’ which follows provides more details about how to structure your plan, and what you could include under each section.

**[college or university]**

**DRAFT British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024**

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**4.3 Our contribution to other relevant long-term goals.**

**In this section, you should select from the other eight policy-specific long-term goals in the national plan, which are:**

**Family support, early learning and childcare** *[is childcare provision for staff and students accessible for BSL users? is information on flexible working provided in BSL?]*

**School education** *[does your organisation offer teacher training courses? If so what provision is there for BSL users who want to become teachers?]*

**Training, work and social security** *[what about your functions as an employer? How do you encourage BSL users to apply for jobs and support them in the workplace? How do you prepare and support graduates who use BSL for the world of work]*

**Health (including social care), mental health and wellbeing** *[is health and wellbeing information and advice for staff and students accessible in BSL? if there is an in-house medical centre how well does this provide a service to students who use BSL?]*

**Transport**

**Culture and the Arts** *[how can students who use BSL be fully involved in the cultural life of the college/university?]*

**Justice**

**Democracy** *[is it possible for staff and students who use BSL to be included in leadership/representative groups in the college/university?]*

**SECTION 2:**

**Introduction**

Explain that this is the (draft) BSL Plan for this college/university, as required by BSL (Scotland) Act. It sets out draft actions we will take over the period 2018-2024.

It follows the BSL National Plan, published 24 October 2017, which was developed through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

Framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan, where these are relevant to the work of this organisation.

Set organisation’s context for the plan.

Confirm commitment to protecting and supporting BSL, including in its tactile form.

Describe involvement of BSL users in developing/commenting on draft.

Commitment to continued engagement around a) implementing actions and b) providing feedback on progress.

Our organisation will contribute to national progress report in 2020.

How can people comment on the draft? Timescale?

**Name of lead officer**/who to contact with any questions.

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](http://contactscotland-bsl.org/) [cid:image001.gif@01D1966E.ADD680A0](http://contactscotland-bsl.org/)

**SECTION 3**

**Short summary:** captures overall aim of the plan and includes some key actions (will be completed later)

**SECTION 4:**

**DRAFT BSL NATIONAL PLAN FOR [INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC BODY]**

**NB: ALL NATIONAL PUBLIC BODIES SHOULD CONSIDER INCLUDING THIS SECTION IN THEIR BSL PLANS**

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| **4.1: Across all our services**  We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:  *“Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users”* |

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| **Our Actions**  [These should reflect actions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 in the national plan. The text below gives the number of the relevant action in the national plan, and offers an example of how this could be worded in a college or university plan (although would need to be more specific, ie. where possible say what steps will be taken, by when). Please also consider what additional actions you can take which will help make progress towards the long-term goal for all public services]  **By 2023, we will:**  [2] analyse existing evidence we have about students and prospective students who use BSL in our college/university; identity and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress.  [3,4] improve information and services for students and prospective students who use BSL[[2]](#footnote-2), including making our website more accessible to BSL users.  [5] promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’, which allows BSL users to contact public and their sector services and for these services to contact them.  [6] Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training, and enable them to take up such training.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your college/university that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for public services?** |

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| **4.2: Post-School Education**  We share the long-term goal for post- school education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:  *“BSL users will be able to maximise their potential at school, will be supported to transition to post-school education if they wish to do so, and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s)”* |
| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * [25] we will take action to ensure that students and prospective students who use BSL are properly supported. This could include:   + Providing accessible information about what BSL users can expect from the college/university.   + Full access to open days for prospective students who use BSL.   + Support throughout the student journey for students who use BSL (including completing application forms, interviews, applying for Disabled Students Allowance etc)   + Support during the transition process, which needs to be agreed between the school and college or university.   + Access to information within the college/university campus. * [26] Take on board guidance/advice produced by the SFC and others to ensure that across the college/university, staff are aware of their responsibilities towards BSL users, and that students who use BSL know what to expect. * Invite continuous feedback from students/prospective students and staff who use BSL over the coming year/18 months after adopting this plan. * Commit to reviewing/refreshing this plan which includes more ‘local’ actions (based on that feedback) after the national progress report (due October 2020). * [27] provide assistance (including examples) to students who use BSL to help them compete SAAS application forms. * [include any other actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for post-school education] |

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| **4.X: 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”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * [include any actions the college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for family support, early learning and childcare. If the college/university has childcare facilities for staff/students is this accessible and welcoming to parents and children who use BSL?] |

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| **4.X: 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”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * [include any actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for school education] |

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| **4.X: 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”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * [35] Raise awareness of the UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ scheme for students who use BSL towards the end of their course, so that they can benefit from the support it provides when they enter the world of work. * [include any actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for training, work and social security] |

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| **4.X: 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”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * Take steps to ensure that health/mental health services (including advice and counselling services) within the college/university are fully accessible to students who use BSL. * [include any actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for health, mental health and wellbeing] |

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| **4.X: 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”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * Consider how the college/university can work with local transport providers to ensure that travel information is accessible and well-publicised. * [include any actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for transport] |

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| **4.X: 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”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * Take action to ensure that extracurricular/recreational activities offered within the college/university are accessible to students who use BSL. * [include any actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for culture and the arts] |

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| **4.X: Justice**  We share the long-term goal for justice set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:  *“BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * [include any actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for justice] |

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| **4.X: 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”* |

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| **Our Actions**  **By 2023, we will:**   * [include any actions your college/university can take which will help make progress toward the long-term goal for justice] |

**SECTION 5:**

**What happens next?**

* How to comment on this draft?
* Details of hold public meetings?
* Final version of the plan will be published by October 2018. In English and BSL.
* Please contact [insert name] if you want to continue to be involved as we further develop/implement the actions in our plan.

1. A post-16 education body (as defined by section 35(1) of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)