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

**A BRIEF GUIDE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES PREPARING BSL PLANS**

This guidance has been written by the Scottish Government Equality Unit[[1]](#footnote-1) to help local authorities to write their own BSL plans, which must be published by October 2018. The Equality Unit co-ordinates the Scottish Government’s work on BSL.

Background

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies listed in the schedule of the Act to publish BSL plans. These 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 D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users; and
* Be published in BSL as well as in English in both draft form, and in final form.

What should be in local authority BSL plans?

The legislation says that BSL plans should ‘try to achieve consistency’ with the [BSL National Plan 2017-2023](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540). It also says that BSL plans of listed authorities should take account of any guidance issued by Scottish Ministers.

The BSL National Plan 2017-2023 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.

* Local authorities should consider structuring their BSL plans under the same ten long-term goals.
* There are some actions in the national plan which local authorities should copy or adapt in their own plans. For example, where the national plan commits to improving information and advice for parents of D/deaf and Deafblind babies/children (Actions 10 & 11), local authorities may consider a) including an action to signpost parents to this information, as well as b) producing their own complementary information about local resources.
* Local authority plans should include other actions they will take to help make progress towards the long-term goals in their own area. This means that local plans will be tailored to local circumstances/opportunities priorities.
* Actions to be taken by organisations who provide services on behalf of the local authority (such as leisure services) can also be included in your plan.

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

**[insert name of local authority]**

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

**SECTION 1:**

**Contents**

**SECTION 2:**

**2.1 Introduction**

**2.2 Name and contact details of lead officer**

**2.3 Where to find the BSL version of this plan**

**SECTION 3:**

**Short summary of the plan**

**SECTION 4: DRAFT BSL NATIONAL PLAN**

**4.1 Across all our services**

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

**4.3 School Education**

**4.4 Training, Work and Social Security**

**4.5 Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing**

**4.6 Culture and the Arts**

**4.7 Justice**

**4.8 Democracy**

**NB. Local authorities may wish to include actions on post-school education, transport, and justice. These have not been included in the guidance as the relevant actions in the national plan do not have implications for local authorities.**

**SECTION 2:**

**Introduction**

Explain that this is the (draft) BSL Plan for this LA, as required by BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. It sets out draft actions this LA will take over the period 2018-2024.

It follows the BSL National Plan 2017-2023, published 24 October 2017, which was developed through extensive engagement with D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

Framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan.

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.

This LA 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-BSLcid:image001.gif@01D1966E.ADD680A0](http://contactscotland-bsl.org/)

**SECTION 3:**

**Short summary:** captures overall aim of the plan and includes some key actions

**SECTION 4:**

**DRAFT BSL NATIONAL PLAN FOR [INSERT NAME OF] COUNCIL**

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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 local authority plan (although would need to be more specific, i.e. 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 2024, we will:**  [2] 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.  [3,4] improve access to our information and services for BSL users[[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’ to staff and to local BSL users. This is a free service 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.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your local authority that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for public services?** |

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| **4.2: 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**  [These should reflect actions 10, 11, and 12 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 local authority plan(although would need to be more specific, i.e. 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 family support, early learning and childcare.]  **By 2024, we will:**  [10,11,12] Provide early years staff with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and about resources that are available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or Deafblind child.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your local authority that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for family support, early learning and childcare?** |

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| **4.3: 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**  [These should reflect actions 17, 18, 20, 21, and 23 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 local authority plan, (although would need to be more specific, i.e. where possible say what steps will be taken, by when). Please also consider whether there are additional actions you can take which will help make progress towards the long-term goal for school education]  **By 2024, we will:**  [17, 18] 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.  [20, 21] 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.  [23] 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.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your local authority that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for school education?** |

**[NB the actions on post-school education in the BSL National Plan do not have implications for local authorities. However, they may wish to consider whether there are any local actions which could help make progress towards the long term-goal for post-school education, 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)’]**

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| **4.4: 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**  [These should reflect actions 28, 34 and 35 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 local authority plan, (although would need to be more specific, ie. where possible say what steps will be taken, by when). Please also consider whether there are additional actions you can take which will help make progress towards the long-term goal for training, work and social security]  **By 2024, we will:**  [28] 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.  [34] 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.  [35] 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.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your local authority that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for training, work and social security?** |

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| **4.5: 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**  [These should reflect actions 40, 45(a), 48 and 49 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 local authority plan, (although would need to be more specific, i.e. where possible say what steps will be taken, by when). Please also consider whether there are additional actions you can take which will help make progress towards the long-term goal for health, mental health and wellbeing]  **By 2024, we will:**  [40] a) 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.  [45a] Through integration boards, ensure that psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users.  [48] take steps to improve access to information about sport, and to local sports facilities and sporting opportunities.  [49] ensure that any local work to tackle social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your local authority that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for health, mental health and wellbeing?** |

**NB None of the actions relating to transport in the BSL National Plan have implications for local authorities. However, they may have local actions they could take to help contribute to the long-term goal for transport, 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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| **4.6: 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**  [These should reflect actions 54, 55, 56 and 57 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 local authority plan, (although would need to be more specific, i.e. where possible say what steps will be taken, by when). Please also consider whether there are additional actions you can take which will help make progress towards the long-term goal for Culture and the Arts]  **By 2024, we will:**  [54] enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.  [55] encourage and support BSL users to consider a career in culture and the arts.  [56] increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on relevant websites and at venues.  [57] improve access to the historical environment, cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your local authority that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for culture and the arts?** |

**NB None of the actions relating to Justice in the BSL National Plan have implications for local authorities. However, they may have local actions they could take to help contribute to the long-term goal for Justice, which is ‘BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland’**

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| **4.8: 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**  [These should reflect action 65 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 local authority plan, (although would need to be more specific, i.e. where possible say what steps will be taken, by when). Please also consider whether there are additional actions you can take which will help make progress towards the long-term goal for Democracy]  **By 2024, we will:**  [65] 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.  **Are there any other actions you can take in your local authority that will help make progress toward the long-term goal for democracy?** |

**SECTION 5:**

**What happens next?**

* How to comment on this draft (is it a formal consultation? What are the timescales? How will you make sure it is accessible to D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users?)
* And/or, will you hold public meetings, and encourage D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users to attend to share their views on your draft?
* 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 with the Council as we further develop/implement the actions in our plan.

1. For more information, please contact Gordon Hay, BSL Policy Officer ([gordon.hay@gov.scot](mailto:gordon.hay@gov.scot)) or Hilary Third, Equality Policy Manager ([Hilary.third@gov.scot](mailto:Hilary.third@gov.scot), 0131 244 7326). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)