

Stirling Council

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-24

November 2018

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BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015:

Stirling Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

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SECTION 2: Introduction

This document is the English version of the British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for Stirling Council 2018 – 24. This is available in BSL at stirling.gov.uk/bsl.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires all local authorities to develop their own local plan to help deliver Scottish Government's British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017 – 2023.

This Plan sets out the actions Stirling Council will take to provide equal access to services and support for BSL users in the Council area. It follows the BSL National Plan which was developed with D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them and has the same long term goals as the National Plan.

This plan confirms the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity for all our citizens and supporting them to lead full and positive lives within supportive communities. It also shows the Council's commitment to protecting and supporting BSL.

Officers from different Council service areas and partner organisations worked together to develop this plan. People who use BSL, and people and organisations supporting and working with BSL users advised the Council on what they would like in the plan.

The Council wants to continue to work with people who use BSL in delivering the Plan and monitoring progress on this. Stirling Council will also contribute to the Scottish Government's national progress report on BSL in 2020.

For questions about this plan contact:

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British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via: <https://contactscotland-bsl.org>

Phone: 01786 404040 (general enquiries)

SECTION 3: Plan Summary

The aim of this Plan is to set out actions to improve how BSL users find out about our services and that they have equal access to these. We will also work with BSL users to help us make our services more accessible. The plan will also help us work with key partners such as Active Stirling, to make sure BSL users can access local leisure and sports opportunities.

Key actions we plan to deliver:

- We will ensure that the Contact Scotland - BSL online interpreting service is widely promoted as a method of contacting the Council and Active Stirling.
- All Council staff will be offered opportunities to learn about BSL culture and Deaf awareness.
- Identified staff in Council services who work directly with the public will be offered opportunities to learn how to communicate effectively with BSL users.
- We will work with BSL users to make the Council's Website and other digital methods of contacting our services more accessible.
- We will work with BSL users to develop communication support signs for use in reception areas and offices with public access.
- Staff in schools will be offered the opportunity to learn how to communicate better with parents who use BSL to help them be better involved in their child's education.
- We will develop and review BSL translation and interpreting guidance to help staff know how and when to engage appropriately qualified BSL interpreters or other support.
- We will work with third sector organisations supporting BSL users to build our understanding of the needs of BSL users locally.
- We will work in partnership with public sector organisations in the Forth Valley area to develop and share good practice in supporting BSL users across all of our service areas.

SECTION 4: BSL PLAN FOR STIRLING COUNCIL

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”*

Our Actions

Actions 1-13 below support actions 2,3,4,5 and 6 in the National Plan. The relevant National Plan action numbers are shown alongside, for example (NP2).

The 2011 Census stated there are 355 BSL users in the Stirling Council area.

The following actions will help us understand existing information we have about BSL users, and identify and fill gaps in this. They will also help us learn how our services are being used and where people may need more support to use these. Gathering additional information will also help us measure our progress in meeting the needs of BSL users. (NP2)

By 2024:

- 1** Following introduction of the Co Do system for recording customer information, people using Council services will be asked if they would prefer to use BSL, including Tactile BSL, when communicating with us. With their permission, this information will be stored and shared across all our relevant information systems.
- 2** We will record where individuals prefer to use BSL to access Advice Services for advice, advocacy and representation.
- 3** We will record Council house tenants who prefer to use BSL on our Northgate System.
- 4** We will record where individuals prefer to use BSL to access our Revenue & Benefits Service or apply for support through this Service.
- 5** We will ensure our Schools, Learning and Education Service record where children and young people prefer to use BSL on SEEMiS.

- 6 We will ensure people using our social care services who prefer to use BSL are recorded on our Swift System.
- 7 We will ensure our Employee Records Information Network (ERIN) records our employees who prefer to use BSL.
- 8 We will work with public sector organisations in the Forth Valley area to share good practice on improving evidence about BSL users in the area.

The following actions will help us improve access to our information and services for BSL users, including making our website more accessible to them (NP3, 4).

- 9 We will ask BSL users to help identify any improvements needed to our website to make it easier for the BSL community to use.
- 10 We will apply what we learn in improving our website to other forms of digital communication and engagement used by our Services.

The following actions will help us promote the use of the Scottish Government's BSL online interpreting video relay services '**contactSCOTLAND-BSL**' to staff and to local BSL users. This is a free service which allows BSL users to contact public sector services and for these services to contact them. (NP5)

- 11 We will promote the use of **contactSCOTLAND-BSL** as a key method for BSL users to contact the Council and its arm's length organisations including Active Stirling.

The following actions will allow us to offer staff who work with BSL users appropriate BSL awareness training. (NP6)

- 12 We will introduce awareness and learning opportunities for staff and Elected Members including raising awareness of BSL, Deaf Awareness and specific BSL training for agreed staff groups.
- 13 We will work with public sector organisations in the Forth Valley Area to share good practice on providing appropriate BSL awareness training.

4.2: Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

Currently there are no children with BSL as their first language accessing the Early Learning and Childcare provision within Stirling Council. 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”*

Our Actions

Actions 14 and 15 below support actions 10, 11, and 12 in the National Plan. The relevant National Plan action numbers are shown alongside for example (NP 10).

By 2024:

- 14 We will provide our Early Years and Family Support staff with information about BSL and Deaf culture and resources that are available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or Deafblind child. (NP 10, 11, and 12)

- 15 We will provide our Partner Childcare and Early Years providers with information about BSL and Deaf culture and resources that are available in BSL, to support them to meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or Deafblind child. (NP 10, 11, and 12)

4.3: School Education

Currently there are no children or young people attending school within the Stirling Council area who use BSL as their first language. 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”*

Our Actions

Actions 16 -19 below support actions 17, 18, 20, 21 and 23 in the National Plan. The relevant National Plan action numbers are shown alongside for example (NP17).

By 2024:

- 16** 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. (NP17, 18)

Currently within Stirling Council, there are two Teachers of the Deaf. One holds the mandatory BSL qualification at the required level, whilst the other is working towards this qualification. Schools, Learning and Education Service can provide appropriate support to meet the needs of children and young people using BSL. Consultation undertaken in preparing this plan has confirmed that members of the BSL community would like the level of qualification of Teachers of the Deaf to be higher.

- 17** We will take forward advice developed by Education Scotland to:
- a) improve the way that teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL.
 - b) make sure that parents who use BSL know how they can be better involved in their child's education. (NP 20, 21)
- 18** We will gather information from our schools to allow us to contribute to the SCILT (Scotland's National Centre for Languages) 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. (NP 23)
- 19** We will work collaboratively with further and higher education providers, particularly Forth Valley College and Stirling University, to support the transition of young BSL users.

4.4: Training, Work and Social Security

Currently there are no adults or young people who participate in learning and employability services provided by Stirling Council who use BSL as their first language.

The Learning and Employability Team will continue to provide a person centered approach across its learning and employability programmes including Fair Start Scotland, LEAP Stirling, Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Community Based Learning, Supported Employment, Modern Apprenticeships and the Employability Fund. Learning and Employability will continue to align and integrate services to provide the best access to these for participants including BSL users.

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”*.

Our Actions

Actions 20 -23 below support actions 28, 34 and 35 in the National Plan. The relevant National Plan action numbers are shown alongside, for example (NP28).

By 2024:

- 20** We will make sure that Staff in Skills & Youth Employment (Schools & Learning) working with partners, can signpost pupils and students to a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and their transition to training or employment (NP28).

- 21** The Learning and Employability Team will continue to work with partners delivering learning and employment services and with employer groups, to help signpost them to specific advice on the needs of BSL users. This will include supporting the continued effective partnership working of the Local Employability Partnership and direct work with ACE Cornton and Stirling Community Enterprise (NP 34).

- 22 The Learning and Employability Team will continue to raise awareness locally of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme with BSL users and employers so that potential employees and employers can benefit from the support it provides (NP35).
- 23 We will provide our Learning and Employability staff and volunteers with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and resources available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of individual BSL users and their family members. (NP 10, 11, and 12).

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"*.

Our Actions

Actions 24 -30 in this section support actions 40, 45a and 49 in the National Plan. The relevant National Plan action numbers are shown alongside, for example (NP40).

By 2024:

- 24 We will signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL (to be produced by NHS Health Scotland and NHS24), and develop complementary information in BSL about local provision, as appropriate (NP40).
- 25 Through Clackmannanshire and Stirling Integration Joint Board, we will make sure that services like psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users. (NP45a).
- 26 We will improve access to information about sport and physical activity opportunities for BSL users by working with partners in the local sport and physical activity sector, including Active Stirling and ClubSport Stirling.
- 27 We will provide contacts and information about community sport and physical activity opportunities for BSL users through Active Stirling's digital platforms.

- 28** We will work with partners in the local sport and physical activity sector, including Active Stirling and ClubSport Stirling to raise awareness of the needs of BSL users.
- 29** We will make sure that any work we undertake locally to tackle social isolation includes the needs of BSL users.
- 30** We will continue to encourage individuals to use Self-Directed Support options to help them access appropriate supports, including translation services, to address potential social isolation. (NP 49).
- 31** We will promote the services and opportunities provided by the Forth Valley Sensory Centre for BSL users and their carers, friends and families to our communities.

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”*

Our Actions

Actions 32-36 in this section support actions 54, 55, 56 and 57 in the National Plan. The relevant National Plan action numbers are shown alongside, for example (NP 54).

By 2024:

- 32** Our Culture Strategy and action plan will be developed to incorporate the needs of BSL users.
- 33** We will help BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals through increased use of qualified BSL Interpreters, volunteers trained in BSL where appropriate and signed video. (NP54).
- 34** We will signpost BSL users interested in theatre work to Solar Bear who work with individuals and theatres to develop deaf performers, actors and backstage staff. (NP55).

- 35** We will increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on our website and social media platforms, at our venues and facilities across the area and by working with Forth Valley Sensory Centre and our local deaf community to promote information. (NP56)
- 36** We will work with partners in the culture and arts sector locally to raise awareness of the needs of BSL users and to identify ways to improve access to cultural activities and the performing arts. (NP 57).

4.7: Democracy

We currently provide BSL interpretation support on request, to BSL users who wish to participate in Community Council meetings.

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”*

Our Actions

Action 37 below supports action 65 in the National Plan, as shown by the number alongside.

By 2024:

- 37** We will 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 (NP 65).

SECTION 5: Monitoring delivery and reporting progress

We will develop arrangements for monitoring progress in delivering this Plan and reporting this to our BSL community and the appropriate Committee of the Council. Stirling Council will also contribute to the Scottish Government’s national progress report on BSL in 2020.