

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN FOR EDINBURGH 2018 -2024

The City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership

This plan aims to improve services across the City of Edinburgh Council and the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership for British Sign Language (BSL) Users and those who represent them. This plan has been prepared through consultation with BSL communities and is our joint response to the [Scottish Government's National BSL Plan 2017-23](#)

The plan is available in both written English as well as [British Sign Language](#)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit and published the National British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2017-23 in October 2017. The National Plan is made up of 10 long term goals and 70 actions designed to achieve these.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires that all public agencies in Scotland must produce a local plan demonstrating how they will work towards implementing the national plan and improving services for BSL Users throughout the region. The City of Edinburgh Council and the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership (EHSCP) have launched this plan to set out how we will approach and deliver the goals and actions for the city between 2018 and 2024. Following the launch of the plan in October 2018, an implementation plan will be established to monitor and track progress of the plan and the actions required to deliver it. Consultation with the BSL users of Edinburgh will continue and an update on progress will be submitted to the Scottish Government in October 2020.

The City of Edinburgh is home to approximately 300-400 Deaf BSL users and approximately 1,000 people who said they use BSL during the last census, and is visited by many more, for work, for family and for leisure. A priority in this plan is to ensure that BSL users throughout the city have equal access to services that are welcoming, inclusive, fair and focused on their needs.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Focused engagement with BSL users across the city began soon after the launch of the Scottish Government's national plan in October 2017. Since then, we have been building a comprehensive consultation and engagement programme with BSL users across the city and beyond. We kicked this off with a successful all-day walk-in weekend event in the city centre, staffed with colleagues from a range of council and health services. Following this and using some contacts gained for the event, a BSL reference group made up of BSL users, their parents/carers, their partners, BSL/English Interpreters and academics has also been established. This group articulated many of the priorities and issues faced by BSL users.

We have also published information on the Council's website and social media pages as well as setting up a closed Facebook group for BSL users to give their views and feedback on the plan. Through Social Media, BSL users were able to give their feedback by recording a video of themselves on their home device in BSL and sending it to us either privately or publicly.

Through the Council's Consultation Hub, the online consultation on the plan was open for six weeks from the end of July until the beginning of September, however engagement with BSL users directly started in the Winter of 2017.

Finally, as part of our ongoing partnership working arrangements with other organisations we have shared information and best practice about the approaches we took to develop this plan and learned from others.

Consultation and Engagement Key Facts:

- Reference Group was made up of 12 people including Deaf BSL users, parents/carers of Deaf BSL users, partners of Deaf BSL users, Council colleagues who are deaf BSL users, BSL/English Interpreters and a Linguistic Academic from Heriot Watt University.
- We had a total of seven responses to the online survey consultation, with many respondents providing high levels of details and content for the plan.
- On Twitter, we reached 70,945 accounts. Our posts were "liked" 24 times with 41 "retweets" of information. 92 people clicked through on the links we provided.
- On Facebook, we reached 8,752 accounts. Our posts were "liked" 11 times with six "shares". We also had 32 people clicking through on our links
- On the Facebook Group, BSL Edinburgh, to date 29 people have joined.
- We published three BSL information videos (including a BSL version of this plan) on YouTube, as of 10 September 2018, these had been viewed 337 times.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This plan has been created using expertise from across a broad range of council services including economic development, strategy & policy services, digital, communications, procurement, education, lifelong learning, the Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership, equality & rights as well as our customer facing teams in locality offices and our contact centre.

As part of our commitment to delivering the actions and goals of this plan, the Council will contribute to the national progress report in 2020. We will also continue to engage with our BSL community throughout the implementation of this plan and to gather their views and feedback on the progress we have made.

2. SUMMARY

BSL Plan for Edinburgh 2018-24 is based on the long term goals of the National Plan:

- What we'll do across all of our services
- Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare
- School Education
- Training, Work and Social Security
- Health (Incl. Social Care), Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and The Arts
- Democracy

Our plan focuses on ensuring BSL users and their families have equal access to services that are welcoming, inclusive, fair and focused on their individual needs.

This plan sets out the actions that we are aiming to deliver between 2018 and 2024. We are focusing our resources on a number of key areas:

- Ensuring services and the information we provide to customers are accessible to BSL users.
- Ensuring the principles and outcomes of "Getting it right for every child" are delivered for all D/deaf or deafblind children and young people and ensuring their families are able to access support when required.
- Supporting our BSL communities to access jobs, education or training to ensure they are not left behind economically.
- Providing support to BSL users to take part in Edinburgh's rich cultural history and to share their own BSL and Deaf culture.
- Ensuring BSL users can access mental health and wellbeing services when required.
- Encouraging BSL users to engage and become involved in the democratic and public life aspects of the City of Edinburgh.

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

We aim to ensure that all of our plans and strategies contribute to and deliver on the outcomes and objectives of the Council Business Plan 2017-22. ***The Programme for the Capital, the Council's Business Plan*** was launched in the Summer of 2017 following the local Council elections and the establishment of a coalition Council agreement. The plan sets out the aims and objectives for the next five years to ensure Edinburgh is a *vibrant and resilient city of opportunity* and for the Council to be *forward looking and empower* its citizens. The plan is built upon the foundation of Council citywide strategies and plans and aims to support our partners to deliver joined up services for mutual benefit. The Business Plan is set against the backdrop of ongoing financial and social challenges but still aims to deliver high quality and transformational services for our customers.

The BSL Plan for Edinburgh 2018-24 plays an important role within our city and contributes specifically to the delivery of the Council Business Plan across a range of strategic aims and objectives. These

objectives are cross-cutting and can only be realised through smarter joined up working between services and partners in all sectors. The BSL Plan for Edinburgh 2018-24 contributes to ensuring:

Edinburgh is a vibrant and resilient city of opportunity:

- Citizens can lead healthy, active lives with improved wellbeing and can participate in the cultural life of our city;
- Everyone regardless of background can fulfil their potential and have equal opportunities of employment whilst feeling safe and resilient to deal with change
- Children and young people have the best start in life; and
- Residents are connected both socially and in terms of transport & infrastructure with access to housing, facilities and amenities which meet their needs;

Our organisation is forward-looking and empowering:

- We deliver value for money services through optimising our resources and building on the capabilities of our workforce;
- We provide services that focus on prevention and early intervention that are planned to ensure we can continue to meet the needs of citizens;
- We are a leading organisation in community engagement that places our customers at the heart of all we do through being responsive, accessible and fair to all;
- We work with our partners to deliver services locally and act openly and honestly ensuring we are inclusive and transparent.

THE COUNCIL AND THE EDINBURGH HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP

The Council and the EHSCP are large organisations which deliver a wide range of services to residents and businesses within the city and to our visitors and commuters to the city. This plan covers all aspects of these two organisations. The Council is made up of four directorates:

- **Communities & Families** is responsible for Education & Schools, Early Years, Lifelong Learning, Sports, Libraries, Community Centres, Social Services for children & young people, Community Justice, Homelessness, CCTV, Family Protection, Offender Management, Domestic Abuse and Asylum Seeking.
- **Place** is responsible for Planning, Economic Development, Housing, Regulatory Services, Licensing, Environmental Health, Waste, Parks & Green Spaces, Bereavement Services, Scientific Services, Transport, Public Safety and Cultural Services including Museums & Venues.
- **Resources** is responsible for Interpretation & Translation Services (Incl. BSL services), Finance, Procurement, HR, Legal Services, Internal Audit & Risk, Health & Safety, Customer Services, IT, Council Tax & Benefits, Property & Facilities, Security, Catering and Cleaning Services.
- **Chief Executive's Office** is responsible for Corporate Communications, Strategy & Insight and Safer & Stronger Communities.

The Health & Social Care Partnership: Following the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014, many adult social care and community health services, once the responsibility of the NHS and the local authority separately, are now provided through an integrated Health and Social Care Partnership. Among these services are adult social work, older people's services, disability services, learning disabilities, community & primary care health services, care for people in their own home or in nursing homes and some hospital based services.

The governance and strategic direction of this partnership is the responsibility of the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board. This DRAFT plan is completed with the actions which the Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership will take. The development of the Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing section of this plan is a key objective of the [Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership's Strategic Plan 2016-19 \(Action 28\)](#). The implementation of this plan also links to local work to implement the [Scottish Government's See Hear Strategy](#).

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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”

By 2024, we will:

- Review and audit the information we hold on citizens who are BSL users throughout the city to establish useful baseline data and identify key gaps in information. We will use this information to focus resources on improving specific services and to measure the progress of this plan.
- Establish detailed records of BSL competencies and skills already held by colleagues across the organisation. This will enable us to ensure that BSL training and development is focused on areas of need such as locality hubs and offices where BSL using customers can visit
- Discuss with the Scottish Government the need to improve the Census question on BSL usage to ensure we have access to more accurate data on the number of people within the city who use BSL.
- Ensure that where appropriate and in line with the national Census, BSL is included as a response under the demographic and equality sections of surveys and consultations.
- Establish drop in sessions at our Locality offices to encourage more BSL users to engage with our range of services.
- Explore alternative ways for BSL users to contact the Council, for example sending BSL video clips, interpreting newsletters, how-to videos and webchat
- Continue to improve access in locality offices to contact Scotland through making better use of technology such as tablets and web chat programmes.
- Improve our colleagues' understanding of BSL users' needs and deaf culture through holding awareness raising and training sessions with customer facing staff through e-learning and workshops
- Continue to provide specialised lifelong learning service (D/deaf Learners Service) for D/deaf and deafblind people

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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”

By 2024, we will:

- Provide literature from the National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) and other nationally developed BSL resources to families as early as possible in their child’s life.
- Explore the continued recruitment of deaf BSL users in schools and other childcare settings (or utilising existing staff). This would include how these colleagues could also support families of newly diagnosed deaf children. The NDCS already offer “Family BSL” support which we would continue to use.
- Develop deaf / BSL awareness training specific for early years and childcare workers and make available to all our service providers.
- Work with our BSL communities and our partners to develop new resources and information for families as feedback has suggested that these can sometimes be overwhelming and/or too focused on health or medical support.
- Explore the role and impact of deaf role models used by other UK Local Authorities to understand the benefits to our organisation. This may include bring deaf people and families together to discuss their communication choices, hearing aid equipment and speech development.
- Continue to discuss communication choices with parents and signpost them to family BSL classes for additional support.
- Support children’s early literacy using BSL and visual media including support to help families to read with their deaf children. We will do this through provision of staff training around appropriate visual supports, communication practices and early BSL.
- Continue working within our libraries and locality hubs to ensure we deliver events and activities that are accessible to deaf children and their families.
- Explore how best to provide digital resources for communicating information to children and their families.
- Provide BSL learning and training through specialised lifelong learning (D/Deaf Learners Service) for parents / carers and their families whose child is D/deaf or deafblind.
- Provide BSL learning and training through specialised lifelong learning (D/Deaf Learners Service) for Early Years employees and nursery staff including private nurseries.

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4.3 SCHOOL EDUCATION

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish Public services 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:

- Review the level of BSL knowledge and skills across our teaching and education support staff with particular focus on the various levels of SCQF qualifications held. This will enable us to complete competency assessments to identify and effectively resource areas for improvement.
- Contribute to the General Teaching Council for Scotland’s (GTCS) review of the guidance it provides to teachers of pupils who use BSL.
- Utilise best practice set out by Education Scotland (and share ours) to improve how our teachers and support staff can engage more effectively with parents who use BSL and encourage them to become more involved in their child’s learning.
- Explore how BSL can be further included on the 1+2 agenda through offering training, advice and sharing good practice. The overall aim is to provide positive, meaningful experiences of BSL for our learners.
- Continue to consult regularly with parents of deaf BSL using children and young people in schools to measure their satisfaction with our services and discuss any concerns and identify any areas for improvement we could make.
- Explore using deaf mentors for secondary school pupils to support language modelling, careers and life choices as well as someone to discuss their views or issues with.
- Ensure effective support for young people who are deaf to transition to a positive destination.
- Continue to deliver deaf awareness training for all staff in schools before a deaf child starts. This would include teachers, teaching assistants, school support staff as well as janitors and cleaning colleagues.
- Provide BSL learning and training through specialised lifelong learning service (D/deaf Learners Service) for teachers and support staff working with BSL users and their families.

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4.4 TRAINING, WORK AND SOCIAL SECURITY

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish Public services 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:

- Ensure BSL using pupils and students are supported with appropriate and accessible information, advice and guidance about their career and learning choices and the transition process to these options.
- Continue working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland on delivery of the Career Education Standard and Developing our Young Workforce Strategy including promotion of available BSL resources.
- Work with partners throughout the city who deliver employment services to help signpost them to advice on the needs of BSL users.
- Ensure support is provided to BSL users when applying for a Council job. This will include that where BSL using candidates meet the essential criteria, we will guarantee an interview for the post, support them in the application process and make reasonable adjustments for the interview such as providing an interpreter. We will also make reasonable adjustments to the role if the candidate is successful in obtaining the job.
- Explore the opportunity to provide specific training for service providers through the Joined Up for Jobs Network.
- Raise awareness of the UK Government’s “Access to Work” Scheme with employers and BSL users. The Council already offers guaranteed interviews to those with a disability and utilises the Access to Work scheme.

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4.5 HEALTH (INCL. SOCIAL CARE), MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish Public services 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:

- Improve the availability of accurate and relevant health and social care information in BSL and work with BSL users through existing and potentially new Deaf people’s forums to determine where this should be located.
- Provide specialist BSL social work assessments and care management, together with interpretation duty sessions and equipment through a contract between the Council and the Lothian Sensory Partnership until March 2020
- Over the course of 2019/20, review the above provision and commission appropriate services to run from April 2020.
- Work with BSL users to improve the way adult social care is delivered, by explicitly including BSL users in the EHSCP’s community engagement strategy.
- Take forward the work to extend free personal care to everyone who requires it as directed by the national agenda, taking account of BSL users
- Integrate the NHS Health Scotland BSL learning resource into the overall See Hear training plan.
- Explore the current position and future potential for a BSL marker on all patient management systems used within the Health and Social Care Partnership and integrate into staff training as required.
- Ensure that, in-line with Scotland’s Mental Health Strategy 2017-27, BSL users get the right help at the right time, expect recovery and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma. The EHSCP funds Stress Control which will continue to provide courses in BSL as required, and hosts the Lothian Deaf Mental Health Service and Lothian Deaf Counselling Service (to be recommissioned August 2018)
- The City of Edinburgh Council is developing approaches to working with Edinburgh Leisure on BSL issues.
- The four locality Physical Activity Alliances will consider ways of improving access to information and opportunities in relation to physical activity for BSL users.
- The five-year work plans on tackling social isolation and loneliness within the four Locality Improvement Plans (LIPS) will consider the needs of BSL users.

4.6 CULTURE AND THE ARTS

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish Public services 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:

- Explore options for offering more BSL activities, either as outreach or in-house.
- Review opportunities to develop staff training for front of house.
- Ensure up to date, accessible information is available for museum venues on websites such as Euan’s Guide and through completing Visit Scotland Accessibility Audits.
- Explore developing the use of technology such as tablets and screens to provide BSL translations for visitors to museums and venues across the city.
- Explore recommencement of BSL tours in museums through funding to be agreed with See Hear.
- Continue working to develop the use of organisations which are funded by the council and offer BSL or captioned events. Some are actively working to improve access for D/deaf audiences (a full list of these organisations and their work can be provided).
- Continue to support professional pathways to enable BSL users to consider a career in culture and the arts through exploring the support of volunteers and internship programmes which aim to widen access to museums.
- Explore the potential to develop career talks and volunteering opportunities, for example BSL users to lead tours around venues and sites.
- Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on websites and at venues by ensuring accessible information is up to date on websites and organisations highlighted above.
- Explore options to improve access to the historical environment, cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users through developing staff training and improving information available.

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4.7 DEMOCRACY

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish Public services 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:

- Continue to be committed to fully involving BSL users in the democratic and public life in the city, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies.
- Ensure support is available around the whole electoral process so that users of BSL are not excluded and will include appropriate support and information to ensure they can register as electors and can cast their vote.
- Ensure BSL users are supported to fully and fairly participate should they choose to seek elected office by ensuring information is accessible and regularly reviewed and updated.
- Continue to work in partnership with other stakeholders including political parties and the Electoral Commission.
- Ensure that candidates wishing to stand will be signposted towards the financial support available via Inclusion Scotland’s Access to Elected Office Fund.

GOVERNANCE

The BSL Plan for Edinburgh 2018-24 will be reviewed through the Integration Joint Board (IJB), Council's Corporate Policy & Strategy Committee and the Scottish Government on an ongoing basis with bi-annual updates on progress.

Lead areas accountable for delivering this plan include Health & Social Care, Economic Development, Culture, Democratic Services, Communities & Families and the Council's Strategy & Insight Unit.

Progress on the plan will also be communicated to the public through the Council's press and social media channels as well as ensuring national deaf bodies and associations are kept up to date.

RESOURCES

The Council already provides resources to support access to services for users of British Sign Language, notably through the Council's Interpretation & Translation Services (ITS), which is part of the Resources' Directorate and specialised D/deaf Learners' Service, part of the Communities and Families Directorate. ITS will have responsibility for the provision of resources to support the BSL Plan for Edinburgh. However, the Council recognises the need to challenge the status quo as far as the provision of BSL resources and services is concerned and the Council will therefore undertake a formal options appraisal to determine how these resources should be provided, in order to achieve the outcomes required in the BSL Plan.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The BSL Plan for Edinburgh will be regularly reviewed and updated where appropriate. The plan will evolve and develop over time as actions are delivered and projects mature. A progress report on this plan will be delivered in 2020, two years after the launch in 2018. This report will detail progress and advancements made including an assessment of how actions and measures will change over the life of the plan and beyond.

The Council and EHSCP are keen to ensure we maintain ongoing and open dialogue with the BSL user community. As a result consultation and engagement will continue after this plan is launched and when significant progress is made. BSL users are welcome to provide their feedback at any time on positive or negative developments. This insight is key to ensure we are focusing on areas of greatest need and on our BSL users' priorities.

CONTACT

You can contact us to discuss this plan using the details below:

- By email: StrategyandBusiness.Planning@edinburgh.gov.uk
- Speak to David Craig via ContactSCOTLAND <https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>
- Through Twitter or Facebook, search "BSL Plan Edinburgh".