



Midlothian Council

# British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

2018 - 2024

Midlothian Council  
5-28-2019

# **Midlothian Council**

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

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## **SECTION 2:**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017 – 2023 was published on 24 October 2017. It has ten long-term goals which were co-produced with BSL users across Scotland.

This National Plan and the resultant Plan for Midlothian is as required under the terms of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

The BSL Plan for Midlothian reflects the ten long-term national goals, and sets out the actions the Council will take from 2018 – 2024. This Plan also demonstrates how we will:

- Improve communication and access to services for people who use BSL in Midlothian; and
- Promote the use of and understanding of BSL across the county

### **2.2 About Midlothian**

Midlothian has changed significantly in recent years. The county continues to have a growing population including large numbers of young people and a growing elderly population. In Midlothian we have also welcomed new communities including Syrian refugee families, and the needs of existing communities continue to become increasingly diverse. At the same time, the Council's budget is under pressure and the need to reduce costs and modernise the way we deliver our services has never been more important.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 brings new requirements for the Council and its partners to work with the community and ensure that everyone including BSL Users have the opportunity to participate in local decision making.

This BSL plan sets out our commitment to tackling inequality and promoting inclusion of BSL users. We believe that we need to lead the way in planning and delivering services which meet the needs of our diverse communities and respond to the changes ahead.

### **2.3 Engagement & Consultation**

In developing the Midlothian BSL Plan we have been very conscious of taking into account the views of Deaf and deafblind BSL users. We consider this essential in ensuring the final Plan meets the needs of the Deaf and Deafblind community and will consult and engage with these communities throughout the life of this Plan.

To date in partnership with East Lothian Council, West Lothian Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service we held an engagement/consultation event and

listened/heard through interpreters and in person the views and needs of the Deaf and Deafblind communities Lothian-wide. These views have been reflected in this Plan.

Further, in October we held another event for East Lothian and Midlothian residents with any further needs identified being built into this Plan. This is because we want the Midlothian BSL Plan to be a living document, regularly updated as further needs are identified.

## **2.4 Continued Commitment**

As can be seen from above Midlothian Council is totally committed to continued engagement around:

- 1) Implementing actions; and
- 2) Providing feedback on progress

As such, as and when we are aware of the changing needs of the Deaf and Deafblind community we will update our BSL action plan, and the Council will contribute to the National progress report in 2020.

## **2.5 Name and contact details of lead officers**

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

Lesley Crozier | Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Officer | Midlothian Council |  
Midlothian House | Buccleuch Street | DALKEITH | EH22 IDN

Telephone: 0131 271 3658

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Jayne Lewis | Planning Officer – Physical Disabilities | Midlothian Health & Social  
Care Partnership | Fairfield House | 8 Lothian Road | DALKEITH | EH22 3ZH

Telephone: 0131 271 3665

E-mail: [jayne.lewis@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:jayne.lewis@midlothian.gov.uk)

## **2.6 Where to find the BSL version of this plan**

This Plan is published in BSL and English with English subtitles and can be accessed at [www.midlothian.gov.uk/bslplan](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/bslplan)

## **SECTION 3:**

### **3.1 Short summary of the plan**

Midlothian Council's BSL Action Plan shares the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan. This long-term goal is that 'the Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit'. Midlothian Council will do this by:

- Promoting 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's awareness, knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture, language and service provision;
- Working with BSL stakeholders to ensure and develop resources and information that are relevant and appropriate;
- Taking forward advice developed by Education Scotland to:
  - 1) Improve the way that teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL, and;
  - 2) Ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can get further involved in their child's education;
- Where the Council provides a license within Midlothian enabling BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals; and
- Continuing to support BSL Users to participate in community engagement events

## SECTION 4:

### BSL NATIONAL PLAN FOR MIDLOTHIAN 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

##### 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 simplified access to BSL versions of available information;
- Reviewing guidance on accessing interpretation and translation;
- Continuing to use the intranet and internet to promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services contactScotland-BSL to staff and to local BSL users;
- Continuing to promote staff awareness, knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture, language and service provision issues; and
- Continuing to work with local Deaf organisations to provide a programme of training and awareness raising for front line staff across the Council and third sector organisations

## **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”*

### **Our Actions**

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

- Review the training levels required by interpreters, support staff and teachers;
- Raise awareness of BSL issues throughout the Education system;
- Consider using BSL from the start of a D/deaf or Deafblind child’s education;
- 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;
- Ensure our children’s services have access to nationally developed BSL resources and advice within key programmes such as Bookbug; and
- Work with BSL stakeholders to ensure and develop resources and information that are appropriate and relevant

### **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”*

### **Our Actions**

**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;
- Consider adding BSL as a subject within the education curriculum;
- Identify potential for Teachers to provide BSL Learning in Schools;
- Ensure Deaf Parents have access to information in BSL. This includes Report cards, Parent evenings, routine information, IT apps, etc. and being able to participate in Parent Councils; and
- Consider accessibility of School Trips, Parent Councils, and work placements



#### **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”*

#### **Our Actions**

##### **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;
- Work with specialist organisations to improve the Council’s performance in the number of BSL employees within the workforce;
- 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;
- Look at having transition plans for BSL users in place; and
- Where possible, work with local employment services to help highlight specific advice and guidance required by BSL users

#### **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**

##### **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;
- Through Integration Boards, ensure that psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users;
- Through Integration Boards, ensure that mental health services can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users;
- Take steps to improve access to information about sport, and to local sports facilities and sporting opportunities: and
- Ensure that any local work to tackle social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users

## **4.6: 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.'*

### **Our Actions**

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

- Research technological solutions for providing accessible information in transport hubs (for example bus stations, train stations, airports, etc.) for BSL users;
- Through the Licensing process, we will encourage private transport providers to have access to technology to support communication with BSL users and/or designated drivers have basic BSL awareness;
- Work with Transport providers to raise awareness of the needs of BSL users, and encourage adequate provision of technology to improve the experience and confidence levels of BSL users when accessing public transport

#### **4.7: 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**

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

- Where we provide licences for events within Midlothian, we will enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals;
- For Midlothian events we will increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on relevant websites and at venues;
- Work in partnership with providers of cultural events and activities across Midlothian to increase availability of signed performances and enhance individuals' access to engagement in cultural activities within Midlothian; and
- Explore the use of technology to enhance the experience of BSL users when visiting Midlothian exhibitions or accessing museum collections

#### **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”*

#### **Our Actions**

##### **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;
- Subject to Council IT protocols, provide links on websites to national information on the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland) to provide a signpost to BSL users who wish to stand for selection and election;
- Raise awareness amongst Elected Members about ContactScotlandBSL; and
- Ensure that BSL users have access to information about Elected Members/Public Appointments in BSL

#### **4.9: 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'.*

#### **Our Actions:**

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

- Work with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), Police Scotland and Scottish ambulance Service to develop and implement measures to improve access to emergency services for BSL users; and
- Work with SFRS to improve access to SFRS emergency and preventative strategies, (including home fire safety visits), for BSL users

## **SECTION 5:**

### **5.1 What happens next?**

Midlothian Council continues to be interested in your views on this Plan throughout the life of the Plan.

This Plan has been published in BSL and English with English subtitles and can be accessed at [www.midlothian.gov.uk/bslplan](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/bslplan)

If at any time you would like to comment on this BSL Plan then you can do this in the following ways:

- In BSL you can upload a video on to You Tube at [www.youtube.co.uk](http://www.youtube.co.uk) and send this to the following email address: [equalities@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@midlothian.gov.uk)
- In English you can comment by email to: [lesley.crozier@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:lesley.crozier@midlothian.gov.uk) or [jayne.lewis@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:jayne.lewis@midlothian.gov.uk) or by post using either of the addresses of the lead officers detailed under section 2.2

Midlothian Council intends to hold follow up events throughout the life of this Plan and these will be well advertised on social media, in newspapers, on the Council website and through National D/deaf and Deafblind organisations and groups.

### **5.2 About You & Continued Involvement**

Please contact Lesley Crozier or Jayne Lewis if you want to continue to be involved with the Council as we further develop/implement the actions in our plan. Contact details are as follows:

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