

REPORT TO BUSINESS SERVICES COMMITTEE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2018

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE LOCAL PLAN 2018-2024

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 **Approve the Aberdeenshire British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2018-2024; and**
- 1.2 **Agree that a progress report is reported back to committee no less than every two years as part of the Equality Outcomes Monitoring Report.**

2. Background

- 2.1 The British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023, produced by Scottish Government, places a legal duty under the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 on each public body to produce a local plan, which will reflect the national long term goals as appropriate.
- 2.2 The British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023 was developed with the active participation of D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users who worked with public bodies as part of the BSL National Advisory Group.
- 2.3 Aberdeenshire Council's local plan must align with the requirements of the (BSL) National Plan through actions that are locally orientated but will support meeting the long term goals set out by Scottish Government. Work has been undertaken in consultation with services to ensure the council's draft plan demonstrates how the organisation will work towards the goals of the national plan through locally delivered services.
- 2.4 The 2011 Census highlighted that 418 individuals in Aberdeenshire use BSL as a language other than English at home in Aberdeenshire. It is worth noting that the census question did not ask if BSL was the user's first language.
- 2.5 Each public authority must produce and publish their draft plan, including a BSL version of the plan, for consultation with users. The Aberdeenshire Council Local BSL plan (draft) was consulted on between 22nd June 2018 and July 30th, 2018. The draft plan, including a BSL version was published on the council's website.
- 2.6 The draft plan was promoted through the council's social media channels and through a news release to local media. Four messages were shared across Facebook and Twitter over the course of the consultation. The messages reached 14,397 people in total and were shared 44 times by a range of users, including organisations supporting the deaf community.

- 2.7 The North East Sensory Services, the SeeHear group and Deaf Action also promoted the plan amongst their service users by various methods, including Facebook and Youtube, for example. Where BSL users had agreed to their contact details being given to the council we were able to contact them directly for feedback.
- 2.8 BSL users could respond to our consultations via different means, including an online survey, contact SCOTLAND-BSL telephone service, email, post and face to face meetings. The face to face consultation meeting with the BSL users took place on 23rd July and was attended by seven individuals. Paper copies of the plan and a DVD with the plan in BSL were sent to five individuals identified as not having access to internet.
- 2.9 30 responses were received via the online survey (that includes responses provided from face to face consultation as they were inputted onto the online survey for convenience in obtaining data). One response was received by post. Of the responses received
- 15 respondents considered themselves as BSL users (2 others use Makaton and finger spelling), although only 8 respondents identified themselves as having BSL as their first language
 - 5 respondents were a parent/carer of a BSL user
 - 3 respondents were a practitioner for a public agency
 - 1 respondent who is a member or a group/3rd sector organisation who represents BSL Users
 - 14 respondents selecting other are explaining they were either members of the public, or friends and relatives of BSL users.
- 2.10 Overall most respondents agreed or strongly agreed with actions identified in the draft plan. There were specific actions suggested by respondents for example raising awareness of the apprenticeship programme amongst young people who are deaf, encouraging BSL users to apply for vacancies within the council. Other actions included promoting BSL in schools as part of the Deaf culture and communicating BSL training opportunities to parents and staff.
- 2.11 Suggestions received were reviewed by the appropriate service and have been found to be covered by the scope of the actions already within the plan. On this basis the final plan is due to be published without adding new actions.
- 2.12 The draft plan and feedback received from respondents has been considered by Area committees. Comments from Area Committees are summarised in Appendix 3. A verbal update on any comments from both Formartine and Kincardine & Mearns Committees will be provided at the Business Services Committee meeting.
- 2.13 The council will continue to engage with the BSL community around implementing our actions and providing feedback on progress as stated in the council's plan. Currently there is no guidance or process available for statutory reporting on the progress of implementing Aberdeenshire Council's local BSL plan. Scottish Government will be reporting on progress on the National BSL in 2020, however, there is no template, as yet, for the format of the report. In terms of good practice, the council will report progress, no less than every two years through the Equality Outcome mainstreaming progress reports.

- 2.14 The creation of a specific BSL plan will comply with legislative requirements however it will also further enhance the council's existing arrangements in place to enable BSL users to engage and participate with the council and the services provided. The plan will raise awareness of the unique culture and identity of the D/deaf and Deafblind BSL community and help officers to reflect this within service planning and delivery appropriately.
- 2.15 The Monitoring Officer within Business Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and is satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section C.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the Committee's powers to decide on all policy issues and resource matters (within agreed budgets) relating to those functions delegated to Business Services Committee.

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above and is included in Appendix 2. Positive impacts have been identified as the plan will benefit BSL users in the Aberdeenshire area.
- 4.2 There are no staffing implications arising from the report. Employees will be encouraged to access training opportunities (some are free) that are offered by third sector organisations. Recently, employees had the opportunity to attend free BSL awareness training provided to the council by deaf Action in support of the developing the draft BSL plan.
- 4.3 There may be financial implications as services will be required to cover any interpreting and translation costs. These costs will be met within existing budget lines as there is already a requirement to ensure accessibility of services to those with protected characteristics. As an example of costs, translating the BSL draft plan cost £400 and the plan is of similar length and complexity to the Council Plan.
- 4.4 There are no Town Centre First principle or staffing implications arising from this report.

Ritchie Johnson
Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Lynne Gravener Strategic Policy Lead (Engagement & Equalities)

Date 27th July 2018

APPENDIX 1



From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



Aberdeenshire Council British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2018-2024



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SECTION 1: Introduction

Scottish Government has published the British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023 in October 2017. As part of this plan there are 70 actions which will help the Scottish Government in achieving the 10 long term goals agreed.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 also requires each public body in Scotland to develop and publish a local plan which demonstrates how they will work towards implementing the national plan.

This plan sets out the goals and actions for Aberdeenshire Council from 2018-2024 and is framed around the same goals as the national plan. The BSL plan also aims to ensure equal access to services and support for services by BSL users across Aberdeenshire. The 2011 Census highlights that 418 people in Aberdeenshire use BSL as Language other than English at home in Aberdeenshire.

After consultation with BSL users as well as independent sensory services such as North East Sensory Service and the SeeHear organisation in Aberdeenshire this plan will be finalised and published. The engagement with BSL users will continue during the implementation and monitoring of the plan and Aberdeenshire Council will contribute to the national progress report in 2020.

The consultation on this plan was open from 22nd June and closed on 30th July 2018.

The draft plan and consultation questions have been published in BSL and English and both versions can be accessed online at Aberdeenshire Council website.

If you would like any more information please contact Lynne Gravener, Strategic Policy Lead (Engagement & Equalities), Aberdeenshire Council, Woodhill House, Westburn Rd, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB

Tel: 01467 537878

Email: lynne.gravener@aberdeenshire.gov.uk British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)

SECTION 2: Short summary of the plan

Aberdeenshire Council British Sign Language (BSL) plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the Scottish Government BSL National Plan 2017-2023 which include Education (early years), Training and Work, Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Culture and Arts and Justice and Democracy.

Aberdeenshire Council's BSL plan aims to improve equality of access to services or support for services for BSL users in Aberdeenshire. The draft plan sets out actions that we will deliver during the period 2018-2024. Some of the key actions are:

1. Information and services across Aberdeenshire will be accessible to BSL users.
2. 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.
3. Promoting Aberdeenshire Council as an employer of choice.
4. BSL users will have access to information and services with regard to Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing.
5. BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Aberdeenshire and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Aberdeenshire.
6. BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Aberdeenshire.

SECTION 3: BSL Aberdeenshire Council Plan

Draft outcomes and actions are explained within this section. All actions will be completed by 2024 but actions that can be implemented sooner will be.

3.1: 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:

Continue to monitor the information provided in the Equality and Diversity monitoring form by all new employees. If the employee selects Hearing Impairment (Deaf, partially deaf, hard of hearing) then they have the option to be contacted by Human Resources regarding further support.

We ensure new website content is accessible to all users by following best practice guidelines as detailed by the Government Digital Service (GDS). Our website is tested annually by the Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC) as part of the Better Connected review. The DAC tests cover BSL accessibility.

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.

Promote dedicated Sensory awareness training by North East Sensory Services to staff as part of our Equality and Diversity Seminars.

Promote provision of “face to face” BSL interpretation across our services.

3.2: 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:

Continue to provide early years staff with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and resources that are available in BSL including introducing a BSL card for staff.

Continue to deliver deaf awareness and basic signing classes to ALL staff i.e. teachers, nursery nurses/assistants, office staff, kitchen staff etc. prior to a BSL pupil going to the early years setting

In settings where there are BSL users’ continue to roll out extensive BSL signage in nurseries i.e. toilet, cloakroom, and facilitate the use of visual timetables using BSL signs.

Where appropriate, provide equipment to help the child access the curriculum.

Continue the induction programme introducing families to the service. That includes: initial call from a manager, visit from teacher of deaf children, sending a service leaflet or a DVD and any information relevant to the child from other sources that might be helpful.

Continue to offer regular visits to build up a relationship with parents/families, offer basic family signs, signed resources and offer deaf awareness to extended family i.e. grandparents

Continue to promote Deaf culture and to address social isolation by working with school, nurseries and families in a similar situation.

Support parents who wish to access formal signing classes but cannot afford to, through the collaboration with the partner organisations.

3.3 : 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

Continue to contribute to the government’s investigation into supporting BSL users in the early years of their education. This would mean where possible staff holding BSL level 2 or above would work with pupils and families who use BSL and making sure schools are aware of the communication needs of any pupils or parents who use BSL and where to source these for example

Contribute to support the learning of BSL in schools for hearing pupils as part of the 1+2 language programme, including sharing best practice and guidance.

3.4: 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:

1. Continue making full use of the information and support provided through Skills Development Scotland to assist pupils and students in their career choices through attendance and promotion at school and university career fayres.
2. 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.
3. Raise awareness locally of the UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ (AtW) scheme with employers and with employees who are BSL users so that they can benefit from the support it provides.
4. Continue to promote Aberdeenshire Council as an employer of choice through displaying our Disability Confident (Employer) logo.

3.5: 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:

1. Engage the Aberdeenshire See Hear Implementation Group to review information produced by NHS Scotland and NHS 24 to assess the need for additional local information. We will support the development of this information if required.
2. Review existing psychological therapies to ensure that BSL users are able to access these on a fair and equal basis.
3. Work with NHS Inform and the local third and community sectors to identify and promote the range of community opportunities available for physical activity to BSL users. We will also work with Aberdeenshire Culture and Sport and Physical Activity Service to support people who are deaf to be physically active.
4. Develop a Social Isolation Strategy to ensure the needs of BSL users are considered and addressed. We will publish any parts of the strategy which are specific to BSL users in BSL.

3.6: 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

By 2024, we will:

1. Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.
2. Encourage and support BSL users to consider a career in culture and the arts.
3. Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on relevant Aberdeenshire Council websites and at Aberdeenshire Council venues.
4. Improve access to cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users on relevant Aberdeenshire council websites and Aberdeenshire council venues.

3.7 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.

Information on the Access to Elected Office Fund which is run by Inclusion Scotland and funded by the Scottish Government will be available on <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/elections> and highlighted within the nomination pack.

SECTION 4: What happens next?

The council will continue to engage with the BSL community around implementing our actions and providing feedback on progress as stated in the council's plan. Since there is no formal requirement to publish progress reports, the council will report progress in terms of good practice, and no less than every two years through the Equality Outcomes mainstreaming progress reports.

APPENDIX 2



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions).	
Service	BUISNESS SERVICE
Section	POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES)
Title of the activity etc.	The Aberdeenshire Council British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2018- 2024
Aims of the activity	The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish their local British Sign Language (BSL) plans showing how they will promote and support BSL. To comply with the Act, the Aberdeenshire Council British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2018-2024 has been prepared in conjunction with the Scottish Government British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023. The plan sets out ten long-term goals for BSL in Scotland, covering early years and education; training and work; health, mental health and wellbeing; culture and the arts; justice and democracy. These ten long goals were duplicated into the Aberdeenshire BSL Local Plan and followed by locally oriented actions. The Aberdeenshire BSL local Plan aims to improve accessibility and to remove any barriers to information and public services in BSL; to support children, young people and parents who use BSL, to ensure equality and support in access to our workforce and participation in public life.
Author(s) & Title(s)	Magdalena Bereza

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment.	
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Results from Sensory Support Service customer survey for parents of BSL pupils and partner providers.
Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	Relevant Services across Aberdeenshire Council are being consulted for feedback

External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).	D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users and parents with D/deaf children, the See Hear organisation and the North East Sensory Services. The British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023 plan was developed with the active participation of D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users who worked with public bodies as part of the BSL National Advisory Group. It is not required by local public bodies to consult on long term goals set out in the plan.
External data (census, available statistics).	The online survey, results from the consultation
Other (general information as appropriate).	N/A

Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.	
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	N/A

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.		
What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:
	Public consultation on the draft plan	22 nd June-30 th July

Stage 5: Are there potential impacts on protected groups? Please complete for each protected group by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.				
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Yes			
Age – Older	Yes			

Disability	Yes			
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)	Yes			
Religion or Belief			Yes	
Gender – male/female			Yes	
Pregnancy and maternity			Yes	
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)			Yes	
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)			Yes	
Marriage and Civil Partnership			Yes	

Stage 6: What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impacts.	Positive (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)	Negative (describe the impact for each of the protected characteristics affected)

<p>Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts on those with protected characteristics you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.</p>	<p>The Aberdeenshire Council BSL plan actions aim to create equal opportunities through removing barriers in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to a wide range of information and public services in BSL; • improving the experience of children who use BSL, when they move from school to college, • access to health care and mental health services for BSL users; • ensuring that the Scottish Government funded employment and training opportunity is accessible to BSL users • promoting opportunities for BSL users participating in politics on the local level and public life, 	

Stage 7: Have any of the affected groups been consulted?	
If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	The North East Sensory Services, the SeeHear group and Deaf Action and their service users were consulted by various methods.

Stage 8: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?		
	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.		

Stage 9: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups?	
These should be included in the action plan.	The Aberdeenshire Council BSL plan aims to minimise social isolation of the BSL users by promoting inclusion in education, Culture and Arts and public life. By promoting the Deaf Culture, we aim to create the environment of inclusion and understanding that will allow for positive relations between BSL and non BSL community members.

Stage 10: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?
Our actions will create multiple opportunities for integration and participation that will benefit both, BSL and non BSL users by allowing equal access to services, education and employment and public life.

Stage 11: What equality monitoring arrangements will be put in place? How the EIA will be used to monitor the proposal

<p>These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).</p>	<p>Actions within the Aberdeenshire Council BSL local plan will be progress reported within Aberdeenshire Council Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming report twice every four years.</p>
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Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?

<p>Please complete the appropriate box/boxes</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.</p>
	<p>No negative impacts have been identified as the plan offers opportunities for integration and participation for all BSL users and reduces accessibility and communication barriers for BSL users.</p>	
	<p>2</p>	<p>Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.</p>
	<p>3</p>	<p>The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen</p>

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

N/A

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.

<p>Sign off and authorisation.</p>	<p>1) Service and Team</p>	<p>Equalities and Community Engagement Policy, Performance and Improvement</p>
	<p>2) Title of Policy/Activity</p>	<p>(if appropriate)</p>

	3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/ activity.	Name: Magdalena Bereza Position: Policy Officer Date: 01/06/2018 Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Lynne Gravener Date:	
	5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Position: Date:	Name: Position: Date:
	6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee. e.g. Social Work and Housing Committee.		
7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk			Date:
(Equalities team to complete) Has the completed form been published on the website? YES/NO			Date:

Appendix 3 - Area Committee Feedback

Marr Area Committee – 21st August 2018

Comment	Observations by Author
Online interpreting video relay services were very important, particularly due to a lack of interpreters in the North East. Access for personal use, as well as public, should be supported.	CONTACTScotland is Scotland's British Sign Language Interpreting Video Relay Service which enables contact with all of Scotland's public bodies and third sector organisations.
Learning of BSL in schools as part of the 1+2 language programme was also particularly important, with reference to acquired hearing loss and the more people having BSL skills the better, however there were concerns about there not being enough trained teachers of BSL.	Ideally a deaf person would teach BSL whether in school or in external classes as they are the experts. However, there are very few deaf people in this area trained to be able to deliver BSL training. Currently, teachers of the deaf will do some teaching of BSL to classes or in schools, if there is a pupil using BSL in that school, however as they also have caseloads of other deaf pupils, they would not be available to do this extensively and their numbers are not sufficient for this to be available if lots of schools requested it or if it were to be available every school.
To request further information on financial support for parents to learn BSL.	As we take on children from birth Teachers of Deaf would go in to homes to deliver BSL training at no cost

Banff & Buchan Area Committee – 21st August 2018

Comment	Observations by Author
Makaton should be used as part of the activities supporting the plan	Makaton is a different sign system and not a language like BSL. It tends to be used by pupils with additional needs and in special schools.
Councillors should have access to any courses that are made available to help raise their awareness regarding sign language.	If basic awareness training is available to the council in the future it will be offered to both staff and elected members.

Garioch Area Committee – 21st August 2018

No comments

Buchan Area Committee – 21st August 2018

Comment	Observations by Author
To welcome and recommend approval of the Aberdeenshire British Sign Language Plan 2018-2024	Noted
To request that Officers be reminded that embedded document links within paper agendas serve no purpose	Noted