



From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire Council British Sign Language 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.

The draft plan and consultation questions have been published in BSL and English and both versions can be accessed online at Aberdeenshire Council website. The consultation on the plan was open from 22nd June and closed on 30th July 2018.

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 was 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.

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 draft actions that we are going to deliver during the period 2018-2024. Here are some of the key actions:

1. Information and services across Aberdeenshire will be accessible to BSL users.
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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

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:

1. 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.
 2. 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.
 3. 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.
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4. Promote dedicated Sensory awareness training by North East Sensory Services to staff as part of our Equality and Diversity Seminars.
5. 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:

1. 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.
 2. 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
 3. 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.
 4. Where appropriate, provide equipment to help the child access the curriculum.
 5. 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.
 6. 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
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7. Continue to promote Deaf culture and to address social isolation by working with school, nurseries and families in a similar situation.
8. 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:

1. 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
 2. 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.
 3. 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.
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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.
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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:

1. 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.
 2. 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.
 3. Aberdeenshire Council will continue to signpost elected members who use BSL to Access to Work scheme for information on support available to undertake their role as an elected member.
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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.
