Ayrshire Shared

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

## Mid Term Report October 2021

# Executive Summary

The British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years that show how they will promote and support BSL*. In 2018 Ayrshire Equality Partnership partners across Ayrshire including Ayrshire College, East, North and South Ayrshire Councils, East, North and South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Ayrshire & Arran, developed and published a shared BSL Local Plan. The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan set our collective intentions in how we planned to improve communication and access to services for BSL users who work, learn, and live in Ayrshire. The BSL Local Plan set out ten long-term goals for BSL in Ayrshire and described the actions that would be taken between 2018 and 2024 to progress towards these goals. This progress report will outline the actions that we have taken towards meeting these goals over the last three years and the work planned for the next three years to achieve the goals.

Actions were set out within the ten long-term goals across the following areas:

**Scottish Public Services**

**Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare**

**School Education**

**Post-School Education**

**Training, Work and Social Security**

**Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing**

**Transport**

**Culture and the Arts**

**Justice**

**Democracy**

* Wherever we refer to 'BSL users' we mean D/deaf and/or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language.

# Scottish Public 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."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will provide Deaf Awareness training for staff, particularly frontline staff. | A 10-week Introduction to BSL training course was delivered across the partner organisations in 2019. In addition to this, short BSL/ Deaf Awareness sessions were held.<br><br>Further training had to be postponed due to the pandemic. Online training was proposed however feedback received was that this was not the best way to learn BSL.<br><br>A number of courses were planned across Ayrshire for staff to learn basic BSL but due to the pandemic have been postponed and will run in due course.<br><br>Two online Deaf Awareness Training sessions were delivered to staff by Deaf Action in May 2021 during Deaf Awareness Week. Over 100 members of staff signed up to this training but a few were unable to attend on the day.<br><br>BSL Awareness online training, produced by NHS Health Scotland, was shared across the partners. |
| We will jointly promote contactSCOTLAND-BSL to staff and service users. | Two face to face sessions took place at University Hospital Crosshouse and North Ayrshire Council in 2019 with other sessions planned across other parts of Ayrshire for early 2020. However, due to the pandemic the further sessions did not take place. Since then online sessions have been offered by contactSCOTLAND-BSL and these have been shared across the partner organisations and staff encouraged to attend. Unfortunately, the number of staff attending these sessions cannot be quantified. |
| We will develop a specific BSL page on our public websites with information in BSL, or signposting to relevant information that is available in BSL. | Accessible information has been placed on the partners' websites, however much of this has been focused in relation to Covid, with links to national information.<br><br>As we navigate our way through the pandemic, the partners are developing dedicated pages for BSL users to ensure there is direct access to information.<br><br>Information from BDA was also shared via the partners' social media sites, in particular tagging the local Ayrshire Deaf Club. |

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will explore the use of technology to help meet communication support requirements. | The partners are currently at different stages of introducing VRI technology to support BSL users.<br><br>VRI technology was identified in early 2020; however, due to the pandemic this was not fully progressed across all the partners. It is anticipated that as services and buildings re-open, VRI technology will be sourced and purchased. |
| We will conduct a scoping exercise to find out the level of BSL skills amongst staff, particularly frontline staff. | This was to be undertaken in 2020 but due to the pandemic this has been delayed. We will progress this in due course. |
| We will develop and promote an accessible checklist to ensure barriers to participation in community engagement and involvement are removed. | East Ayrshire Council has developed an Accessible venue training course which is shared with partners. This course encompasses provision for BSL users to ensure effective engagement and participation. This course is reviewed on a regular basis.<br><br>Participants are asked to provide information on any additional requirements when attending community events. |
| We will ensure BSL provision is available for community engagement events. | There have been very few engagement events in the last 18 months. Communication has been kept open via messaging with the Ayrshire Deaf Club during the pandemic to ensure that support is provided when needed. That said, the pandemic has highlighted further issues with communication for BSL users. For future engagement, when online surveys are used targeted work will be considered with local BSL users to provide in a format appropriate to them. |
| We will establish a diverse Ayrshire-wide user network to enhance the implementation of the Ayrshire BSL Local Plan. | The User Group network has not been established and has been delayed due to the pandemic.<br><br>The Pan Ayrshire Sensory Impairment Operational Group was re-established in September 2021. |
| We will raise awareness of translation and interpretation procedures to ensure staff can readily access the appropriate communication for service users. | The partners were exploring the possibility of putting out a joint tender to procure translation and interpretation service provision including BSL provision. The tender specification documentation was almost complete, however, this coincided with the impact of the pandemic which has delayed progress. This will be revisited and progressed in due course. |

***"Smart phones were provided to the North Ayrshire Sensory impairment team to allow them to engage better with the BSL/Deaf community."***

# Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

We share the long-term goal for family support, early learning and childcare set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

**"The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a Deaf or Deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will ensure that parents and family members have access to funded BSL courses. | The Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service has a Sign Language Assistant who tutors families in BSL free of charge.<br><br>Non-funded courses are provided to parents at the Ayrshire Deaf Club and through providers such as BSL Ayrshire. |
| We will establish an Ayrshire-wide Network for Deaf children and young people. | A National Managed Clinical Network (MCN) (Hearing Impairment Network for Children & Young People (HINCYP)) was established in 2019. HINCYP aims to improve the care for children and young people with a hearing impairment including BSL users. The MCN has involvement from parents/carers of children and young people with a hearing impairment, as well as professionals working in health, education and social work; and voluntary sector organisations. |
| We will ensure that information on language options is available to children and their families from the point of diagnosis. | All of Ayrshire's families with newly diagnosed deaf babies are supported by peripatetic teachers of the deaf (ToDs). ToDs continue to share all communication options with families and continue to offer BSL tuition from a native BSL user to families who wish it at diagnosis and beyond. |

# 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."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will ensure that parents and carers have access to information in an appropriate format. | Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service's database has details of the preferred contact method for families of deaf children. Interpreters are provided for meetings with BSL users.<br><br>Deaf parents whose children are hearing rely on individual schools for accessibility. |
| We will ensure that interpreter support is available to enable children, young people, parents, and carers to participate in wider school activities such as Parent Council meetings, school trips, Team Around the Child (TAC), Case Conferences, Children's Hearings and so on. | As of June 2021, 138 children are supported regularly across the 3 Ayrshires.<br><br>Deaf parents of Deaf children are provided with interpreters by Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service. No events or trips have taken place over the past two school sessions due to Covid. |
| We will ensure that interpreter support is available for young people to access work placements, local careers and Further Education events. | Unfortunately, due to the pandemic work placements were suspended. As we navigate pathways out of the pandemic support will be made available for young people. |
| We will further promote BSL for 1 + 2 languages within the school curriculum from early years. | Two primary schools in South Ayrshire, one in North Ayrshire and one in East Ayrshire currently teach BSL as part of 1+2 languages. Over the past five years over 500 children, deaf and hearing, will have been exposed to basic BSL signs. |
| We will develop a partnership approach between education and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to better support deaf children and young people. | A meeting between CAMHS, Local Authority staff and Deaf learners took place pre-pandemic but due to the pandemic no further meetings have taken place. We will progress this in due course.<br><br>Deaf learners continue to access NDCS 'healthy minds' sessions through 'healthy minds' trained teachers of the deaf from Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service. |
| We will work in collaboration with deaf young people to explore the possibility of establishing an Ayrshire youth club. | An Ayrshire youth club for deaf young people was successfully established early 2019 and has continued to meet during the pandemic via remote access. The youth club continues to grow despite the pandemic. |

# Post-School Education

We share the long-term goal for post school education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

**"BSL users will be able to maximise their potential at school, will be supported to transition to post-school education if they wish to do so and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s)."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will develop links with appropriate partners to ensure that young people are tracked in relation to post-school destinations. | In the last three years the Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service has tracked 33 deaf young people, however, none of these were BSL users.<br><br>Staff from the Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service met with staff from Ayrshire College in 2018. Since then annual deaf awareness sessions have been arranged in the three college campuses. This was delivered remotely during the pandemic. |
| We will ensure college involvement with school transition meetings where appropriate. | Relationships with Local Authority Deaf schools have been enhanced since the development of the Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan 2018-24. College staff are involved in school transition meetings, as required, and this has resulted in a smoother transition for pupils moving on to college. Some staff members attended transition meetings for students coming to the College.<br><br>Ayrshire College students can request support at any stage in their learning journey. Students have the opportunity to advise the College of any support requirements at application stage, allowing support at interview to be made available. As soon as the College receives a request for support, the Inclusive Learning Team will contact the student to arrange a needs assessment and identify appropriate support strategies.<br><br>The College has delivered support remotely using Teams and Zoom throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and will continue to offer both face to face and online support moving forward. |

# 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."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will ensure regular meetings of the Transition Forum for BSL Users to support an easy transition from school to a positive destination. | Unfortunately, regular meetings were not held due to the pandemic and this will be revisited in due course. |
| We will promote Ayrshire Disability Inclusive Confident Employers (DICE) to staff as a resource for expert advice on initiatives such as 'Access to Work'. | The partners signpost staff within their respective organisations, to the Ayrshire DICE group via their intranets. Each of the partners has a seat at the DICE meetings and therefore sometimes receive the requests/referrals direct from members of their own organisation. |

***"NHS Ayrshire & Arran are rolling out remote BSL access across the organisation including Near Me appointments."***

# Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

We share the long-term goal for health (including social care), 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."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will develop information, in collaboration with deaf children and young people, regarding the importance of attending audiology appointments. | This was to be undertaken in 2020 but due to the pandemic and limited engagement opportunities with children and young people, this has been delayed. We will progress this in 2022 in line with the easing of Covid restrictions. |
| We will use social media to share information on available mental health support. | During the pandemic digital information was a key part in the sharing of information to all communities. However, a number of the planned areas of work for accessing health care and mental health services have been delayed. The focus over the last 18 months has been to ensure BSL users were aware of the changes to accessing health care. A number of BSL video clips were produced in line with the changes to service provision, access to audiology provision, the restarting of services and changes to accessing urgent care.<br><br>Information from the British Deaf Association was also shared via the partners' social media sites. To ensure information was reaching BSL users, the local Ayrshire Deaf Club was tagged to allow them to further disseminate any information. |
| We will provide palliative and end of life care information and care plans that are co-produced by Deaf people and deaf sector organisations. | The My Anticipatory Care Plan (My ACP) template to support palliative and end of life care used across Scotland was developed nationally by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS).<br><br>A patient leaflet on My ACP is available online and engagement is being made with HIS to seek support to take this action forward in the second phase of the plan.<br><br>The care plan itself will require further consideration to ensure families are aware of the individual's most important wishes. |

# 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."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will explore technological solutions to support private transport providers to communicate with BSL users. | Due to the impact of the pandemic, these actions have not been progressed. Reviewing the actions set in 2018, the partners are considering whether BSL awareness training with a focus on the use of contactSCOTLAND-BSL would be more appropriate and effective solutions. |
| We will ensure taxi providers licensing training incorporates BSL awareness. | As above. |

***"South Ayrshire Council delivered a six weeks BSL beginners course for 18 front line staff members."***

# 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."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will ensure appropriately trained BSL interpreters are available within Civil, Juvenile, and Criminal justice settings. | Although there is the opportunity of BSL interpreters available in these settings, as yet there have been no requests for BSL support. |

# 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."**

The table below provides an update of what we said we would do and what we have done so far in order to achieve this goal.

| What we said | What we did |
|---|---|
| We will ensure BSL training information provided by the Electoral Commission is cascaded to all relevant electoral staff. | The relevant electoral staff are all signposted to the Council website and have links to the Electoral Commission webpages. settings, as yet there have been no requests for BSL support. |
| We will promote information on voting processes in appropriate formats. | Information is available in other formats including a short video of what to expect in a voting station at elections. |
| We will promote the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland). | This is promoted on Council websites. |

***"East Ayrshire Council have successfully delivered two blocks of BSL beginners course for staff."***

Ayrshire
College

East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

EAST AYRSHIRE
Health & Social Care
Partnership

NHS
Ayrshire
& Arran

Iorth Ayrshire Council
omhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

NORTH AYRSHIRE
Health and Social Care
Partnership

south
AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas

south ayrshire
health & social care
partnership