

British Sign Language (BSL) Draft National Plan 2017-2023

**Analysis of responses to the
public consultation exercise**

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Executive Summary

Consultation on the draft BSL National Plan

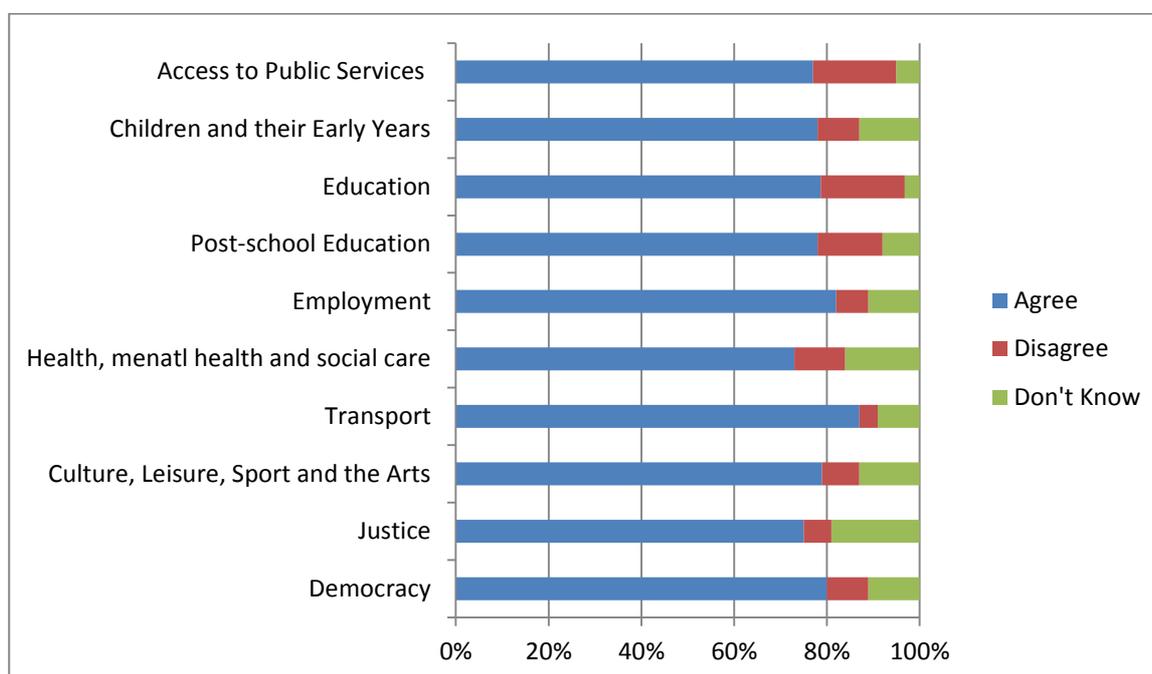
The Scottish Government ran a public consultation on the draft BSL National Plan from 1 March – 31 May 2017. There was a very good response, with around 1,000 people attended around 90 consultation events. In addition, 157 standard consultation responses were received, 63 from groups or organisations and 94 from individual members of the public.

General reaction to the draft plan

The consultation asked whether or not people agreed with the actions under each of the goals (see the graph) and asked for suggestions about how they might be improved.

There was a very high level of support for the draft BSL National Plan. Across the ten goals, at least three quarters of people who responded agreed with the proposed actions. A small proportion said they disagreed with the proposed actions.

Do you think these are the right actions under this goal? (Yes, no or don't know)



Common themes across all public services

There was a strong view that access to public services can and should be improved. There were many experiences of Deaf/Deafblind BSL users having difficulty communicating with or accessing public sector services. People felt that BSL users should be involved in developing new solutions where problems exist.

Most of the general comments about the draft National Plan were positive, and people felt that it should make a big difference to the lives of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. Some common themes which people thought would improve the plan were often repeated throughout the consultation – these were:

1. Improving access to information and services for BSL users across all public services
2. Considering Deafblind BSL users throughout the plan.
3. Including actions that can be delivered in a shorter period of time than the six year life of the plan.
4. Securing the necessary funding and resources to deliver the actions.
5. Ensuring there are sufficient numbers of skilled BSL / English interpreters in Scotland.
6. Exploring how technology (such as online interpreting) can be used to improve access for BSL users.
7. Delivering training on BSL awareness and Deaf culture to key public sector staff.
8. Involving Deaf and Deafblind BSL users in creating solutions.
9. Developing guidance to help support delivery of the actions.

Children in their Early Years

The early years can be difficult but are critically important and people felt that a lot of support should be available at this time. People also suggested peer support for families who use BSL could be helpful, and that training for parent and family members to learn BSL should start as early as possible and should be free. Most people felt that children who use BSL should go to mainstream early years services with the right support in place.

- Deaf babies and children need to have equal access to a range of positive experiences from birth.
- Families with Deaf babies/children need information and practical support
- Professionals – like health visitors, nursery workers and teachers – need to know more about BSL and Deaf culture so they can meet the needs of Deaf children and their families
- Positive exposure to BSL for Deaf babies and their families is really important to help create a more equal environment where Deaf children can thrive.

Education

There was a very strong view that education is the single most important issue for BSL users and that there was no reason why, with the right support, Deaf children cannot achieve what they want to. People felt that Deaf / Deafblind parents whose first or preferred language is BSL should have better access to school information and should be supported to become more involved in their child's education.

The transition from education to college or university study is very important in allowing someone to maximise their potential, but Deaf /Deafblind students who use BSL often feel isolated, and are not given enough information about the support available.

- It is really important to encourage more Deaf people who use BSL to become school teachers.
- Hearing teachers and support staff working with Deaf pupils need to be trained to a higher level of BSL.
- Making BSL part of the school curriculum is crucial, so that more hearing pupils learn the language.
- Having an agreed standard of support for students who use BSL, and a national advisory group to help colleges and universities to fulfil their obligations would be welcomed.

Employment

There was a strong view that employment not only provides an income but helps promote self-worth and independence. However, many Deaf / Deafblind BSL users struggle to find and retain jobs and are anxious about asking for support. It is important that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can access the same opportunities in their chosen career. Opportunities should not be restricted by a lack of appropriate support.

- BSL users should have the same opportunities to get into training and employment as people whose first language is English
- Employment is an important part of having a positive future
- Provision of interpreters in the workplace needs to be improved
- Employers need a better understanding about BSL and how to support employees who use BSL
- Employers and BSL users don't know enough about funding available to support BSL users needing interpreters (and other support) at work.

Health, mental health and social care

Many Deaf / Deafblind BSL users talked about very difficult health-related experiences where they had been unable to access good quality health information and appropriate services. A common theme was being unable to access the necessary support across a range of health issues and services, but in particular to prevent and then treat mental health problems.

- There is insufficient access to health information and services in BSL and this impacts on people's health risks and outcomes.
- People don't necessarily know where to find health information that is provided in BSL.
- The use of technology to access health services is welcome but this should not replace one-to-one support.
- Suitably qualified and experienced BSL/English interpreters should be provided at medical appointments.
- Mental health is a big issue for people who use BSL, and better access to services to prevent and then treat mental illness is crucial.

Transport

Deaf / Deafblind BSL users often rely heavily on public transport, but this can be a difficult experience. Although there was general support for providing accessible information in transport hubs, people also suggested that information is needed on all public transport, with easy access to information at airports, stations, on buses and on ferries. In particular, there is a problem for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users when transport plans are disrupted.

Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts

Being able to access sports and leisure activities is important and can help improve physical and mental health, as well as providing good opportunities to meet other Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. Many people felt that tackling barriers to participation in mainstream sports should be the priority.

Justice

Some people felt that BSL users do not have fair and equal access to justice systems in Scotland. There have been a number of positive initiatives involving BSL users working on BSL access to civil and criminal justice and that any work carried out should build on this.

Democracy

There was a strong view that it was very important for Deaf and Deafblind BSL users to be able to participate fully and actively engage in the democratic process. This includes being able to stand for elected office. While there was support for the actions to help BSL users be more actively involved in the democratic process, there was recognition that achieving these goals will be challenging.

Introduction

Background

This report presents analysis of responses to a consultation on the draft British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan, 2017-2023. The consultation opened on 1 March 2017 and closed on 31 May 2017.

The draft National Plan sets out the Scottish Government's long-term goals for BSL in ten key areas: Public Services; Early Years; Education; Post-School Education; Employment; Health, Mental Health and Social Care; Transport; Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts; Justice; and Democracy. It describes actions to help make progress towards these goals over the next 6 years.

The draft Plan was produced in collaboration with the BSL National Advisory Group (NAG), made up of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and parents with Deaf children, working alongside representatives of the public bodies that will have to implement the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. The NAG was supported in its work by the Deaf Sector Partnership (DSP), helping gather the views of BSL users around Scotland both to support the development of the Plan, and also to make sure the consultation was fully accessible.

How the consultation was run

The consultation paper (available at <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/equality-unit/bsl-national-plan/>) asked questions on each of the 10 goals identified in the Plan. People were able to answer consultation questions either in English or BSL using the consultation website called Citizen Space, by email, by post, or through a consultation Facebook page.

DSP organisations also arranged around 90 consultation events to which Deaf and Deafblind people were invited, along with families and carers. Most, but not all, of those attending were Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. Events were held across Scotland. Some were held in schools, seeking the views of children and young people, others at Deaf Centres, Clubs or Societies. At many events, the subjects discussed were chosen by those attending, depending on their particular interests, and not all groups talked about all 10 goals set out in the draft National Plan.

There were also six open meetings, each focusing on a single key area of the draft Plan (Education, Employment, Transport etc) and there were further meetings of groups with a particular interest – such as BSL users with a visual impairment, BSL / English Interpreters and NAG members.

Who responded

Around 1,000 people attended the consultation events. Three live streaming sessions to explain the draft National Plan were also arranged on Facebook, each attracting over 2000 views. The feedback from all these events has been

considered when writing this report, along with the individual consultation responses described below.

In total, 157 standard consultation responses were received, 63 from groups or organisations and 94 from individual members of the public. The majority of responses were received through the Scottish Government’s Citizen Space consultation hub.

Respondents were asked to identify whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of a group or organisation. Organisations were asked what type of organisation they were. A breakdown of the number of responses received by respondent type is set out in Table 1 below and a full list of organisational respondents can be found in Annex 1.

Table 1: Respondents by type

Type of respondent	Number
Organisations:	
Academic/research	8
Local Government	14
Other	7
Public Body, including Executive Agencies, NDPBs, NHS etc.	16
Representative Body for Professionals	6
Third Sector/Deaf Organisation	12
Total Organisations	63
Individuals	94
Total	157

Annex 2 sets out the full analysis of the Yes/No questions for each of the 10 themes by respondent type. The number of people answering the Yes/No question in each key area is out of a maximum of 157. The Yes/No questions were also considered at some of the consultation events. They have not been included in the final figures because the main focus of these events was to gather comments and suggestions.

This report

This report presents a summary of the comments and suggestions made on each of the 10 goals of the draft National Plan and also sets out some of the other issues people raised. The Scottish Government has access to all of the feedback from the events and the written / BSL responses.

Both at the events and in their Citizen Space responses, people used a range of language when referring to themselves or others. For ease of reading, we have used the single description ‘Deaf / Deafblind BSL User’ within this report.

Common themes and general comments

This section gives a summary of the common themes which were raised at the events or through written / BSL responses. They relate to the draft National Plan overall, rather than on of the 10 goals in particular.

Some of these comments were very positive and included that the draft National Plan is both very good and very important and that it should make a big difference to the lives of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.

There were a range of suggestions about how the draft National Plan could be improved. This was sometimes about aspects which should be made clearer or given greater emphasis. There were also suggestions for other areas which need to be included.

Frequently highlighted issues were:

- It is very important that the needs of Deafblind BSL users are considered throughout the National Plan. Particular issues highlighted included the need to consider Deafblind BSL users when it comes to researching technology or when looking at interpreting services.
- The proposed timescales for delivering on the 10 goals are too long and it would be better to make the proposed changes before 2023. One suggestion was that there could be a staged timetable which sets out when interim improvements can be expected.
- Some of the goals or steps could be clearer or SMARTer¹ and there are places where more detail or further information would be helpful.
- Having the necessary funding and resources to deliver the goals set out in the National Plan will be key. It was suggested that the type and level of resources needed should be set out clearly and that there will be a need for national funding or other support if the goals are going to be realised.
- New technologies offer considerable potential and could provide additional opportunities to support Deaf / Deafblind BSL users in a way that reduces stigma and supports independence. However, it is important to remember that not everyone is comfortable with new technologies and that there will always be occasions when a 'human element' is required.

Another frequently made suggestion was that the National Plan needs to cover BSL / English interpreting. Issues highlighted included:

- Having sufficient and skilled BSL / English interpreters will be central to the National Plan being delivered.

¹ SMART is an acronym often used in relation to objective setting and strategic planning. It generally stands for: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable; **R**elevant; **T**ime related.

- A range of issues need to be considered including the training and/or registration of BSL / English interpreters, the funding from BSL / English of interpreting services and how we will judge if services are meeting Deaf / Deafblind BSL users' needs.

Suggestions included:

- National support is needed to make sure that BSL / English interpreters are available in all parts of Scotland.
- The National Plan should look at improving access to services for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users who also have additional protected characteristics².
- Ensuring Deaf / Deafblind BSL users have equal access to evolving identity terminology and covering discrimination and exclusion within minority communities.

Other comments were about how the National Plan will be delivered. They included:

- It is important that the BSL National Plan is linked into other Scottish Government and NHS initiatives, such as the See Hear Strategic Framework and the Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027.
- The Scottish Government needs a clear implementation plan setting out how the goals and steps will be delivered. This should cover what the different organisations involved will need to do.
- The plans should also include standards to be met and how progress will be monitored. The plans should include the views of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. There was a specific question about whether Local Plans be monitored at national level.
- National guidance on the availability of services needs be developed in partnership with public bodies and needs to take account of local demand, provision and expertise.

Finally, some people or groups commented on how the draft National Plan was developed and the consultation process. The comments included:

- The NAG should have included a representative for BSL / English interpreters.
- The BSL version of the draft National Plan was difficult to understand, and without an interpreter it would have been difficult or impossible to respond to the consultation.
- The final National Plan should be piloted with a group of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.

² These are set out in the Equality Act 2010 and are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

- It will be important that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users are also involved in developing Local Authority plans.

Access to Public Services

Goal: Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users.

Steps that Scottish Ministers will take by 2023 are to:

1. Develop, test and promote a set of guidelines for all Scottish Public Services to improve access to information and services for BSL users. This will include guidelines on how to ensure that BSL users can participate on a fair and equal basis in the design of Scotland's public services, including providing them with information and support to do so.
2. Promote use of the Scottish Government service called contactSCOTLAND-BSL with public and third sector organisations and explore the potential for greater use.
3. Explore how to develop and deliver BSL awareness and training that can be accessed quickly across all frontline public services, including all the services covered in this plan.
4. Consider the need for a comprehensive review of the current BSL/English interpreting landscape, including skill levels, training and regulation. Such a review would develop recommendations aimed at boosting the profession, and supporting the more efficient delivery of interpretation services across the public sector, including all the services covered in this Plan.
5. Explore ways in which BSL/English interpreters can develop more advanced skills to work in specific settings, including the justice and health care systems.
6. Consider where BSL information from across the public sector should be located so that BSL users can easily find it.
7. Give further consideration to what actions we could take to ensure that our approach to delivering public services is person-centred so that BSL users can expect greater consistency.

Question 1 - Do you think these are the right steps under Public Services?

In total, 112 people or groups answered Question 1. Of these, 77% agreed that these are the right steps under Public Services, 13% disagreed, and 11% said they did not know.

Question 2 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 3 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Public Services section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Accessing Public Services were:

Public services are important because deaf people access public services on a daily basis. It is our everyday life. (Event)

BSL awareness training should be ongoing for all public-sector providers. (Individual)

The approach of public services should be person centred so BSL users can expect uniformity and consistency. (Organisation)

Around 115 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Access to Public Services and it was discussed at around 45 events.

There was a strong view that public services are as essential for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users as they are for the hearing community, and that access can and should be improved. People felt that the BSL Community should be central to this change and help develop new solutions where difficulties exist. Due to the importance of this issue, it was felt that clear actions and targets were required so organisations can be held to account.

There were many experiences of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users having difficulty communicating or accessing public-sector services at present.

Develop guidelines to improve public sector information and services (Step 1)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Many public-sector services were difficult to find, use and understand for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- Access to public sector services is a fundamental requirement and difficulties create an immediate inequality.
- There was concern about public sector budget cuts and their ability to implement the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- A common standard should be agreed and monitored across the public sector to support equal treatment for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- There should be increased opportunities for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to be employed in the public sector to improve both understanding and response.
- BSL / English interpreters should be available in key public-sector services.

- Public sector records should 'flag' that someone is a Deaf or Deafblind BSL user so an interpreter can be arranged before contact is made.
- Video clips, or logos to show translation is available for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should be used on public sector websites as a matter of course.

Promote the use of contactSCOTLAND-BSL (Step 2)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Many individuals were not aware of the contactSCOTLAND-BSL service, but there were high levels of support for what it aimed to achieve.
- Support to access social services, health and housing were considered priorities and where many issues were currently being experienced.
- Those who had used the service felt it was positive but felt access is reliant on fast broadband and this was an issue in rural or island communities.
- contactSCOTLAND-BSL relies on technology and there is concern that older people might not have access to the necessary equipment.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- That the service should be more widely promoted and information provided on how it works, the services it covers and how it can help.
- It would be helpful to make clear whether local authority commissioned services, such as social care, and other important organisations, like housing associations, are to be included.
- Access issues, including for older people and remote or island communities, need to be considered.

Develop and improve BSL training in the public sector (Step 3)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- There is full support to improve access to both training and awareness sessions to public sector staff. It is felt that this would improve both access to and the quality of services for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- There is some concern that high levels of staff turnover may make this difficult to manage
- The cost implications for the public sector should be considered so the goal is realistic. This should however not stop the training taking place.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- There are real opportunities for the public sector to work in partnership with Deaf / Deafblind BSL users in either paid or voluntary roles and to develop good quality services for the future.
- The key to increasing awareness and achieving change is to teach children when they are young. This would provide a longer term positive change instead of addressing issues when and if they occur.

A full review of BSL / English interpretation services (Step 4)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- There was a high level of support for a review of BSL / English interpretation services.
- A clear and fair route to access BSL / English interpreters needs to be established across Scotland.
- Awareness and availability differs across Scotland, with some areas having more services than others. Access to interpretation services is difficult in rural or remote areas and waiting times could be long. There were some examples in the islands where there were no BSL / English interpreters at all.
- The public sector needs to both understand and acknowledge its responsibilities regarding interpretation services.
- A number of people raised concerns about confidentiality when using BSL / English interpreters and sharing sensitive issue such as bank, insurance or benefits information.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- BSL / English Interpretation services should consider faith issues, the public sector should consider working alongside faith groups to address this.
- BSL / English Interpretation services need to be available 24 hours a day this is a specific issue in social care or housing services where emergencies can occur.

Support interpreters to develop advanced skills when needed (Step 5)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- The skill level of BSL / English interpreters working in the public sector was considered very important given the role these services have in a person's life.
- The key issue for most is that the BSL / English interpretation is accurate, appropriate for the situation and able to fully represent both emotion and expression.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Consideration should be given to the use of Deaf Relay Interpreters (DRI) where advanced skills were needed. The DRI could work alongside BSL / English interpreters with people who are deaf but not fluent in BSL.
- There could be a specific qualification for public sector BSL / English interpreters, but care needs to be taken not to reduce the number of interpreters available.

Ensure BSL information across the public sector is easy to find (Step 6)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Being able to communicate with Social Work, Health, Housing Services and the Police is seen as vitally important.
- People are concerned that Doctors and Dentists would be reluctant to employ BSL / English interpreters as they would have to pay for them.

Some issues had been experienced in accessing emergency or alert services including 999 calls. Suggestions people made about this action included:

- A common standard for information and communication for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should be established. This would support organisations to meet their responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010.
- Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should be employed within the public sector to help develop appropriate information and support.
- Supporting Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to make contact with emergency services should be a priority.

Make public sector services person-centred and consistent (Step 7)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- It was agreed a person-centred approach was necessary.
- Setting standards for public services and making sure these are achieved were important for consistency.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- A flexible approach should be taken to allow for both individual and changing needs. This can best be achieved through the raising of skills regarding BSL awareness and communication within the public sector, working alongside the BSL communities and supporting increased awareness and a positive change in culture.

Children in their Early Years

Goal: Families and carers with a D/deaf or Deafblind child will be given information about BSL and Deaf culture and will be offered support to learn to sign with their child.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

8. Develop information about BSL and Deaf culture for parents whose baby is diagnosed as deaf through the newborn hearing screening.
9. Commit to continuing the support for families and carers with D/deaf and Deafblind children to learn BSL appropriate for communicating with 0-5 year olds.
10. Support families of D/deaf and Deafblind children by ensuring that they have access to BSL resources as early as possible in their child's life. This will include providing information on BSL resources on our online Family Information Service website.
11. Develop key materials about play in BSL so that parents who use BSL have access to this information at a critical time in their child's life, so that all children can benefit from positive experiences of play.
12. Improve information and access to early years services for parents who use BSL.
13. Explore the best ways of bringing together children who use BSL as part of the early learning and childcare provision.

Question 4 - Do you think these are the right steps under Early Years?

In total, 107 people or groups answered Question 4. Of these 78% agreed that these are the right steps under Early Years, 9% disagreed, and 13% said they did not know.

Question 5 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 6 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Early Years section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Early Years were:

Young children need to have equal experiences as they start to grow.
(Event)

New parents of deaf children should be given as much information as possible and know what they are entitled to. (Individual)

Exposure to BSL will help build the confidence of deaf children and families in a positive way. (Organisation)

Around 100 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Early Years and it was discussed at around 55 events.

People felt that support and information to parents in the early years of a child's life was important to strengthen the bond with the young child. People also felt that having the skills to communicate effectively with their child was very important. Some people suggested that new parents would be anxious and would need help to know what their options were and although people generally agreed with the steps suggested, many people felt there needs to be a clear plan which explains who is responsible for making sure things happen.

Develop information about BSL and Deaf Culture for new parents (Step 8)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- The early stages can be difficult but are critically important. A lot of support should be available at this time as parents are dealing with a new baby as well as learning about the Deaf culture. The time spent in the early stages will make a real difference in the longer term.
- Having written information is not enough, practical support is also needed. However, this should be offered when the family need it or when they feel ready. This will be different for each family.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The information provided should be easy to find, clear and provide practical help such as how to make contact with local services, tips for the home and information on welfare benefits.
- It would be helpful to create opportunities for people to speak to a BSL user or another family in the same situation. A peer support or parent mentoring programme could be put in place

Continue to support parents to learn BSL suitable for 0-5 year olds (Step 9)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- This step was seen as very important and most people felt that access to training could be improved.
- Good parent / child communication helps with self-confidence, resilience and socialising. It is also important to offer training to other family members, including brothers and sisters.
- Support and help should be informal so the parents do not feel under pressure.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Training should be started as early as possible and should be free.
- Support and BSL training should be offered for at least one year as it can be a difficult skill to learn.
- Training should be appropriate for the Deaf culture and where appropriate the hearing culture. Training should also consider the needs of different faith groups where this would be beneficial.

Support families with BSL resources as early as possible, including the Family Information Service Website (Step 10)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- The best information at the earliest stage will support families to become as independent as possible.
- Many people felt that the best support for families of Deaf or Deafblind children would be one that provided BSL training as well as emotional and practical support.
- Face to face help and support is best if families are struggling, but information should be provided in a range of formats.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Meeting other people who have had similar experiences would be useful.
- Resources to support families could be made available in nurseries and schools.
- Awareness of the Scottish Family Information Service Website could be improved as many people don't know about it.

Develop materials about play in BSL so that the child can have positive experiences (Step 11)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- This step received strong support with play seen as important for learning and language and other development and also as providing opportunities to spend time as a family.
- Supporting families to play would help with emotional wellbeing by making connections, building relationships and making friends.
- Play can be an opportunity to meet other parents of Deaf or Deafblind children and to learn together. Children who are Deaf or Deafblind should also be encouraged to play with hearing children to improve language and social skills.
- Play is important in the later years of schooling too; books, places to go and activities to get involved in.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Materials on play also need to be fun.

Improve access to early years services and information (Step 12)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Most people felt that BSL using children should go to mainstream early years services with the right support in place. The more BSL using children can be part of mainstream services, the more BSL will become a familiar language to all children. This will be a positive development.
- Early years services can be a place where a wide range of support and help can be provided. This can be the springboard which helps the child achieve what they want to in their life.
- Some people said that one-to-one support in nurseries was reducing due to budget cuts and this was creating problems.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The current free provision for a CSW is not enough and needs to be increased based on the needs of the child.
- Current early years resources such as books or DVD's should be adapted for Deaf or Deafblind children.

Bringing BSL using children together in early learning and childcare services (Step 13)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Most people felt that although bringing children together was important that early learning and childcare support for Deaf and Deafblind children should be provided through mainstream services.

- Role models are important for Deaf or Deafblind children and opportunities to meet others are very valuable for both the children and their parents or guardians.
- Opportunities for both children and parents to meet other BSL users also helps increase confidence and provides opportunities to talk about challenges people are facing and possible solutions.
- Clubs and social groups for BSL users are a positive and informal way to meet, although this may not be possible in rural areas because of smaller numbers of people and long distances to travel.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The Scottish Government and local councils work to an inclusion agenda where children are educated together and not separated due to any differences, where appropriate. It was seen to be important that groups worked with local councils in developing supports aligned to this aim.

Education

Goals:

That children and young people who use BSL reach their full potential at school.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

14. Discuss with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) how to remove barriers to register Deaf people who want to become teachers.
15. Investigate the qualification level of BSL that teachers have and review how the GTCS's Professional Update and Standards could inform guidance for teachers of pupils who use BSL.
16. Discuss with Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) the potential for developing SQA Awards in BSL.
17. Ensure that appropriate guidance and resources are available to schools and local authorities.

That parents who use BSL can access the same opportunities to be involved in their child's education as other parents.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

18. Ensure that guidance to schools and local authorities considers the needs of parents who use BSL.
19. Consider what more we can do to ensure that parents who use BSL can be fully involved in their child's education.

That the 1+2 language learning policy offers the opportunity for BSL to be included in the suite of languages local authorities choose to offer to children and young people.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

20. Make sure that education authorities and schools know that BSL can be part of the language offer in schools under 1+2 language policy.
21. Gather information annually on where BSL is being offered in schools as part of the 1+2 language policy.
22. Gather and share examples of good practice in teaching BSL to hearing pupils as part of 1+2, and make sure there is guidance to support this.

Question 7 - Do you think these are the right steps under Education?

In total, 109 people or groups answered Question 7. Of these 74% agreed that these are the right steps under Education, 17% disagreed, and 9% said they did not know.

Question 8 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 9 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Education section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Education were:

Many of my friends and I struggle to keep up with work at school. I feel more confident surrounded by people using BSL. (Event)

Teachers need to be better at signing, so children can learn from them. (Individual)

The barriers that prevent deaf people becoming teachers need to be change or removed. (Individual)

Around 110 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Education and it was discussed at around 60 events.

The support and inclusion of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users and parents in education services attracted a great deal of interest. People felt that positive changes are needed and that they should happen now. Education is seen to be a foundation for life and there is no reason why, with the right support, Deaf children cannot achieve what they want to. People are keen to see an improvement plan developed with clear actions, timeframes and responsibilities and with schools held to account.

Removing barriers for BSL users to become teachers with the GTCS (Step 14)

Comments people made about this step included

- Access to teachers who use BSL will improve communication and education standards for Deaf or Deafblind children.
- BSL using teachers would break down stigma and improve understanding of BSL communities and Deaf culture, they would also be positive role models for children.
- Teachers need to be more fluent in BSL than the children they are teaching, this would lead to real progress.
- Schools would be more inclusive places if BSL was a common language within schools.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Schools should employ Deaf / Deafblind BSL using staff in all types of posts and not just teaching posts. This approach should also cover support functions.

- Discussions should take place with the GTCS to encourage Deaf / Deafblind BSL users into teaching. This should support equal access to opportunities.

Consider the qualifications teachers should have in BSL (Step 15)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- BSL skills in schools are essential to build links with the BSL community, Deaf community and wider specialised services.
- Good BSL skills in teachers will help Deaf or Deafblind children feel part of the school as well as improve their education.
- Some people felt that the qualification level for teachers should be high, others felt that to attain this was not realistic. Most believed that there needed to be proportionate assistance to support a good education.
- The qualification levels for Communication Support Workers should also be considered.
- Local authorities and therefore schools, are required to show that they are supporting Deaf / Deafblind BSL users under their equality duties.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Schools could be given a percentage target for teachers trained in BSL based on their size and need.
- Training should be provided in tactile BSL or other languages to reflect the needs of the children.

Consider if (Scottish Qualification Authority) SQA awards for BSL can be developed (Step 16)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Developing an SQA for BSL is a very good idea and will show BSL is as important as any other language.
- An SQA would raise awareness of BSL in local areas but also nationally.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- If an SQA is developed, then all resources and supports for students should be available in BSL too.

Make sure the right BSL resources and guidance are available in schools (Step 17)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- All resources should be of a high standard and as good as any other teaching resources.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- All partners should work together to provide the best support possible. This could include education, the council and deaf support services so a single approach is agreed.
- Resources should be developed with Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- Standards of practice should be agreed and they should be reviewed regularly.
- There should be specifically Scottish materials and resources.

To support parents who use BSL to be part of the school (Step 18)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Deaf / Deafblind parents whose first or preferred language is BSL do not currently feel they are involved in school activity.
- Some people noted that parent involvement is essential and schools are already required by law to make sure this takes place.
- Deaf parents must have the same access and opportunities as hearing parents. This is essential in supporting their child's education and helping them to succeed.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Help should be provided to access school information and find out about the support available to help Deaf parents become involved.

Parents should be supported to be involved in their child's education (Step 19)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Many people felt that there is little understanding of Deaf culture in schools and they were keen for something to be done about this.
- Parents have a key role in supporting their child's education but also their emotional and social wellbeing. Practical support is needed so that parents who use BSL are able to support their children like anyone else.
- There were some concerns that the school would not know if parents were BSL users.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Translation services could help with homework tasks, school information and out of school activities.
- Interpreters should be available at short notice for meetings or discussions with teaching staff.

Including BSL in the 1+2 Language policy (Step 20)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Including BSL in the 1+2 language policy will challenge attitudes, raise awareness and encourage people to learn and use BSL.
- BSL will be seen as equal to other languages in the school.
- Stigma will be reduced and children will feel less isolated if BSL is part of the school programme.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- This could provide a basis for positive discussions between hearing and BSL using children about Deaf culture. This would build relationships and raise awareness.
- How about learning Scottish Sign Language?

Gathering data on BSL being offered in the 1+2 policy across Scotland (Step 21)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Collecting data would allow progress to be seen and identify issues or good practice.
- Data will help make the right decisions about future funding or how services could be delivered.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Data should be reliable and consistent across the country so progress can be compared.
- Adequate resources need to be in place for the action to be successful. Discussions should take place with schools so that progress is manageable.

Sharing good practice and providing guidance to support BSL as part of the 1+2 language policy (Step 22)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- BSL within the 1+2 language policy will help Deaf or Deafblind children feel part of the school, feel confident and do well.
- The 1+2 language policy will provide a framework so progress in BSL can be measured and success can be shared.
- Schools that have BSL as part of their curriculum can share their learning with others, help find solutions, and increase the use of BSL nationally.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Schools can help develop the guidance based on their experiences.
- A group could be set up to support schools to take time out to discuss BSL and share good practice.

Post-school Education

Goal: 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).

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

23. Make sure that students whose first or preferred language is BSL have a much more positive experience when they make the transition to post-school education. We will make sure that schools, colleges, universities and employers are aware of their responsibilities. We will work together to improve the information given to BSL users.
24. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) will establish a steering group to help colleges and universities develop their own BSL plans.

Question 10 - Do you think these are the right steps under Post-school Education?

In total, 99 people or groups answered Question 10. Of these 78% agreed that these are the right steps under Post-school Education, 14% disagreed, and 8% said they did not know.

Question 11 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 12 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Post-school Education section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Post School Education were:

Young people are isolated during the transition between school and college or uni and this needs to be looked into. (Organisation)

These decisions are important to my future. If information is missed it has a negative impact on my future. (Individual)

There should be more partnership working steered by the young person themselves. (Event)

Around 90 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Post-school Education and it was discussed at around 45 events.

A number of people said that the transition from school to college or university study is very important to allowing someone to maximise their potential. They felt that the support available should be appropriate, personalised and should cover not just educational but also wider wellbeing. Many people said that Deaf /Deafblind BSL using students often feel isolated and are given inadequate information about the support available. They stressed that it was important that the move to further education was seen to be a positive experience that sets a young person out on the career path of their choice

Moving to further education will be a positive experience and colleges and universities will be aware of their responsibilities (Step 23)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- The duty to support Deaf / Deafblind BSL users is outlined in both the Equality Act 2010 in terms of reasonable adjustments, and the Additional Support for Learning Act. The BSL National Plan needs to provide more detail on how this will be achieved.
- The career choices of Deaf / Deafblind BSL students in college or university should be based on ability and not bound by limitations.
- Adequate numbers of BSL / English interpreters with the right skills need to be available for the right support to be provided. There is a shortage particularly out with central Scotland.
- Schools, colleges, social work departments and other partners should work together to create a pathway to help Deaf / Deafblind students from school to further education.
- Support available should be clear and known to the student from the point an application is made, they can then decide if the options available suits their needs.
- Some further education establishments may struggle with the costs of improving support for Deaf / Deafblind BSL using students.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- An agreed standard of support should be put in place for all colleges and universities and be monitored.
- BSL / English interpreter services should extend beyond the classroom to support involvement in wider activities and to avoid isolation.
- Support packages should also consider support for Deafblind BSL students or those from different ethnic groups.
- A peer support programme should be put in place where students can learn from the experiences of others.

The Scottish Funding Council will support colleges and universities to develop their own BSL Plan (Step 24)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- All aspects of post education should be considered in the Plan, including access to social issues, physical learning environments and student accommodation.
- Plans for individual colleges and universities could be useful for new students, but joint plans with schools might support the transition.
- A co-ordinated approach is needed across post education services.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The Scottish Government should develop an overarching national college and university BSL plan to make sure there is consistency.
- A national advisory board for further education could be set up to share good practice.

Employment

Goals:

People who use BSL will be supported to develop the necessary skills to become valued members of the Scottish workforce and will have fair and equal access to employment opportunities, including apprenticeships, internships and employability programmes.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

25. Ensure fair and equal access to employment opportunities, including apprenticeships, internships and employability programmes.
26. Introduce in April 2018, a new Scottish employability programme. The key principle of this service is that all those who participate (including BSL users) will receive support to find and sustain work.

BSL users will be provided with support in the workplace to enable them to remain in and progress in their chosen career.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

27. Provide in-work support, of up to 12 months, for BSL users accessing any of our in-work support services.
28. In the new devolved employment services, we will expect those who deliver employment services to work with specialist employment support partners at a local and national level to help tackle the range of barriers that all participants face, including BSL users.
29. We will actively promote the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Access to Work (ATW) scheme to employers and BSL users to ensure a higher uptake and use of the scheme in Scotland.

Question 13: Do you think these are the right steps under Employment?

In total, 102 people or groups answered Question 13. Of these 82% agreed that these are the right steps under Employment, 7% disagreed, and 11% said they did not know.

Question 14 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 15 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Employment section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Employment were:

When I went for an interview and told them I was deaf I still go the job which was great. But my first day on the job I was asked to use the phone? (Event)

Deaf BSL users need to have the same opportunities as other people to access employment. These steps will help. (Individual)

Employment is really important to every single deaf child and adult, so they can achieve what they want to in the future. (Organisation)

Around 100 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Employment and it was discussed at around 40 events.

People said that many Deaf / Deafblind BSL users feel that they struggle to find and retain jobs and are anxious about declaring their need for support. They pointed out that employment is considered essential by many in providing income, self-worth and independence and that these are all important to leading a happy and fulfilling life. It was felt that there are lower expectations placed on Deaf / Deafblind BSL users and that basic support needs to be in place to level the playing field.

Support equal access to employment opportunities such as apprenticeships (Step 25)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- It was suggested that issues in the employment world will decrease if the awareness and support is better in both the early years and education. This will help create confident and competent individuals who felt empowered.
- It is important that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can access the same opportunities in their chosen career. Opportunities should not be restricted by a lack of appropriate support.
- Apprenticeship or intern programmes can last 2 years or more, however funding is stopped after 12 months. There is a concern that this will cause difficulties for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to stay in work.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Information on training opportunities is confusing and a co-ordinated, centralised and fully translated system would be useful.
- The support for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users at the Job Centre should be improved, with staff training on deaf awareness, BSL awareness and the availability of BSL / English interpreters. Opportunities can then be better understood.

Introduce a new programme to support BSL users to find and stay in work (Step 26)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- The Scottish Employment Programme offers the chance to improve the under-employment of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- More information and detail would be appreciated on the content and purpose of this programme

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The preparation for work should be incremental and start from school age. Joint working with schools could be strengthened.
- The programme should include the need for Communication Support Workers (CSW) but also the standards they should work to, their training and their behaviour in the workplace.
- Consideration should be given to training for Human Resource Departments so the right support can be in place through the application, recruitment and employment process.

Provide 12 months of support for BSL users (Step 27)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Most respondents felt that 12 months of support is not enough. Job circumstances could change and some apprenticeship programmes can take 4 years.
- Support needs to be person centred and as such will vary from individual to individual. Applying a single timeframe for support does not reflect this.
- There are additional costs in increasing the level of support to more than 12 months, but this should be considered against the costs of a person being unemployed.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- That length of support is determined based on individual circumstances, level of need and length of the employment or training programme

Employment services will work with specialist support to reduce difficulties BSL users face at work (Step 28)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Sufficient access is needed to interpreters with the appropriate skills and training to support Deaf / Deafblind BSL Users at work
- Deaf / Deafblind BSL Users should be employed within these services to tackle cultural issues and provide advice as well as direct support.

- Guidance should be developed for employers to help them to fully understand the support required for a Deaf / Deafblind BSL using employee, this will prevent unnecessary issues from occurring when in the job.
- There are some concerns about the additional costs that employers may face in providing the right support to Deaf / Deafblind BSL users and whether they would find this affordable.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The support provided needs to be flexible and consider last minute meetings and out of hours working for example.
- BSL / English interpreters are needed not just for work tasks but to support integration in the work place. Many Deaf / Deafblind BSL users felt isolated and excluded.
- A translation hub could be set up to improve the information available to Deaf / Deafblind employees and support employers.

Promote the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Access to Work (ATW) Scheme (Step 29)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Many people agreed that closer working with the DWP would be a good thing and would help improve understanding and help shape the support available. The DWP is key to providing the right support and opportunities and a good relationship should be built between the DWP and specialist services.
- Some people felt the Access to Work (ATW) programme is difficult to understand and not as effective as it needs to be. The types of issues people talked about included the speed of response and ease of access.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The Access to Work (ATW) Programme should cover volunteering opportunities and the current funding cap in place should be reviewed or removed.

Health, mental health and social care

Goal: 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.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

30. Ensure that information on national health screening and immunisation programmes is routinely translated into BSL and is readily available and easy to access.
31. Improve access to, and the availability of, professionally approved health information in BSL by ensuring that it is located in a central place online.
32. Develop and roll out BSL awareness training for health and social care staff across Scotland ensuring that it is readily accessible at the point of need and tailored to a health setting.
33. Consider ways to improve individual patient health records so that a person's records clearly indicate when a patient's first or preferred language is BSL.
34. Ensure that information about people's rights to directing their own social care and support (Self-directed Support) is available in BSL.
35. Ensure that a national source of mental health information, advice and support is developed for BSL users.

Question 16: Do you think these are the right steps under Health, Mental Health and Social Care?

In total, 102 people or groups answered Question 16. Of these 73% agreed that these are the right steps under Health, Mental Health and Social Care, 11% disagreed, and 17% said they did not know.

Question 17 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 18 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Health, Mental Health and Social Care section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Health, Mental health and Social Care were:

It's important that everyone knows about BSL and that people who use BSL as their first language are able to have the same access to health services as everyone else. (Event)

This is very important because if BSL users are unable to get the help they need due to language barriers this could be a big risk for their health. (Event)

Having to ask my parent to support me in the GP as I cannot understand what is being said. So having information will be a big change. (Event)

Around 80 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Health, Mental Health and Social Care and it was discussed at around 65 events.

Many people noted the critical importance of Deaf and Deafblind people being able to access good quality health and social care-related information and services which meet their particular needs.

Other comments included that it will be very important to ensure that the needs of children and young people, older people and of Deafblind BSL users are taken into account. For young people, this might be about ensuring there are people of their own age they can talk to, especially about mental health issues. For older people, there were a number of concerns about the lack of appropriate provision for older people, both in terms of services provided in their own home and around specialist housing or care provision.

A number of people commented on the availability and qualifications of interpreters. These comments included that interpreters are being used at GP and hospital appointments less than 20% of the time and that there are clear barriers facing Deaf / Deafblind BSL users in Scotland. Another issue which people talked about across this theme was that high-quality translating and interpreting services will be key, including in emergency situations. The need for interpreters with particular experience and skills relating to mental health and dementia was also highlighted.

Suggestions included that only Registered Deaf Relay translators or BSL / English interpreters should be used and that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should be allowed to choose preferred BSL / English interpreters. Another comment was that Communication Support Workers (CSWs) can also be very important.

Other general comments included that:

- The Access Support Card and use of contact SCOTLAND-BSL needs to be promoted.
- There can be problems with booking and confirming appointments across a range of services but especially for GP services. For example, people may be asked to phone to confirm an appointment or if services need to change or cancel an appointment, they will often phone. This approach does not work well for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- Advocacy services need to be available. These should be centrally funded and not reliant on charitable or other funding.

Information on national health screening and immunisation programmes (Step 30)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- People need comprehensive and not just summary information.
- Both Health Scotland and Health Boards have the role of providing health information for patient groups, including Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. Better signposting arrangements should make this clear for the BSL community.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Exploring the role of the national Boards in providing information.
- Providing information on screen in GP surgeries and Hospital waiting areas regarding immunisation and any new epidemics, annual or seasonal illnesses and where to seek more advice.
- This information should also be available centrally, including on a national website and there should be clear signposting to this information.

Access to and the availability of health information (Step 31)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Feedback from BSL communities in one area is that they would rather have a Deaf person signing resources than a BSL / English interpreter.
- It may be that translated information needs to be sent as an MP3 link or uploaded to YouTube and holding this type of information on a central site would be sensible.
- Some people are concerned about understanding prescriptions and medicine. After getting prescriptions from GPs, Deaf / Deafblind BSL users find communication difficult with pharmacists. They find medicine instructions difficult to understand.
- Plans are being looked at to set up a Deaf Zone – a website for Deaf people in the West of Scotland. This would be a social zone as well as for the public and third sectors to use.
- Although a central online hub with professional health advice available is welcome, it is not a substitute for one-to-one support within communities, primarily within GP surgeries and local hospitals.

- Not everyone has access to or likes getting their information online.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Supporting a Scottish wide social enterprise organisation run by and for Deaf people where the health service and other public sector could go to get information translated.
- Rolling out of Video Relay Services (VRS) at the initial point of contact would provide the patient with immediate information and language support as well as assisting the staff in 'triaging' the patient more efficiently.
- GP practices should install visual displays in their surgeries so that Deaf patients are alerted when they are due to see their GPs.
- Deaf / Deafblind BSL users also need access to healthy living groups, such as groups offered to people after heart attack, or Dementia support groups or carers groups.

Develop and roll out BSL awareness training (Step 32)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- This also needs to cover Deafblind awareness, including Tactile BSL.
- It will be important to include social care settings as well as health services, particularly given that the population is ageing.
- Health care professionals may in the course of their careers never provide a service for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. It is important for training to be targeted to those staff who are most likely to need it.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Awareness-raising and/or BSL learning should be key parts of the training and qualification phases across all health and social care roles, including being covered on University courses. It could be a mandatory training unit for some courses, including medical and nursing degrees.
- BSL awareness should also be a required element of induction and refresher training across health and social care positions.
- The BSL awareness training should cover all ethnicities, faiths and cultures.
- Consideration should be given to funding support organisations to provide BSL training as there is already significant pressure put on limited financial resources.

Consider ways to improve individual patient health records (Step 33)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- This could build on the work Health Boards and the Scottish Government have been developing on additional needs, through the Access Support Needs Short Life Working Group.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- This step should apply not just to the health sector but also to social care services.
- Individuals' health records should flag up that the patient is Deaf and should set out their communication needs. This would allow the service to ensure an interpreter is always available when required.
- There should be better partnership working around passing on required communication needs as part of referrals between services.

Ensure that information about Self-directed Support is available in BSL (Step 34)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- This is a very important right and it is very important for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to be able to access Self-directed Support. However, many Deaf / Deafblind BSL users may not know about the SDS option.
- A small number of people talked about the problems they had experienced when applying for SDS funding. This was sometimes about the process being difficult but was sometimes about not being receiving any funding.
- There are already resources on SDS available in BSL and these resources should be used rather than duplicating effort.
- The application forms for SDS are inaccessible and the application process is likely to be difficult for most Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Staff assessing Deaf / Deafblind BSL users for SDS must have Deaf culture and BSL awareness training in order to perform any assessment of need.

Ensure that a national source of mental health information, advice and support is developed (Step 35)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- A number of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users talked about very difficult experiences which they, their family members or their friends had been through. A common theme was being unable to access the necessary support.
- A national resource on mental health would be a great way to ensure equitable access to information. Each Health Board could have a micro site that explains their services and pathways into services.
- Telephone led services are inaccessible for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users and there are no comparable immediate access services for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users experiencing a crisis.
- Current access to the information and services relating to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) are not 'Deaf friendly' and/or BSL friendly.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- This step could be changed to 'Ensure that a Scottish national centre for mental health information, advice and support is developed'.
- This step could be changed to 'Ensure that the national source of mental health information, advice and support developed for BSL users is readily accessible in digital and other forms of communication'.
- There should be funding for BSL training for counsellors and psychotherapists who intend to work with Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.

Other comments on health, mental health and social care

People also raised a number of other communication-related issues which did not relate to any of the specific goals or steps in the Draft BSL National Plan. These included:

- There were questions about how the ambition, goals and associated steps set out in the Plan will fit with the activities of Health and Social Care Partnerships.
- The Interpretation and Translation Services Improvement Plan, which was developed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) for NHS Tayside, should be rolled out across every health board and NHS Scotland.
- Access to services for Deaf / Deafblind children whose first or preferred language is BSL needs to be improved. Having access to BSL/ English interpreters who are fluent in BSL would provide Deaf / Deafblind children with the support they need from the child protection system and improve long term outcomes.
- The services covered under this theme should be extended to cover dentistry.
- Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should have text or email options for making appointments.

Other comments focused on wider health, mental health or social care issues and these included:

- There is no dedicated Deaf health organisation in Scotland – like SignHealth and BSL Healthy Deaf Minds.
- There should be a Deaf 'Healthwatch' with powers to intervene when the system is failing.
- Home helps or carers who visit Deaf / Deafblind BSL users must be Deaf BSL users themselves. A good model is the service by DeafCare Services at Deaf Connections in Glasgow.
- There is a lack of Deaf mental health services in Scotland. In particular, there is currently no Deaf / Deafblind CAMHS service and this gap needs to be addressed.

- Deaf / Deafblind BSL users need role models with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or autism to understand more about their disorders.
- We cannot continue to isolate our Deaf / Deafblind elders in care homes, which have not been designed to meet their needs, whose first or preferred language is BSL, and who are cut off from their language and community. We need Deaf care homes and provision specially for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users who have dementia.

Transport:

Goal: BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

Implement the recommendations of 'Going Further: Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework' which has been developed with disabled people, including BSL users. Key actions in the framework include:

36. Ensuring that transport users, including BSL users, can participate in the on-going feedback process of the framework.
37. Researching technological solutions for providing accessible information in transport hubs (like train stations, airports etc.)
38. Creating guidance on how to contact transport providers when things go wrong on a journey.
39. Developing training for transport providers which includes strategies for communicating with BSL users.

Question 19: Do you think these are the right steps under Transport?

In total, 83 people or groups answered Question 19. Of these 87% agreed that these are the right steps under Transport, 4% disagreed, and 10% said they did not know.

Question 20 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 21 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Transport section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Transport were:

It would be fantastic if bus drivers, ticket conductors, cabin crews, knew basic signs - for names of places, food (on planes) because I've had a lot of bad experience - it would make my life a lot easier and accessible!

(Individual)

The ticket man and the tea lady on the train to Aberdeen could sign to me. They said they had done a wee course at work. So why wait until 2023 when it's happening now. (Response from a group of young people)

The group agreed these are the right steps, in particular, training for transport providers because they are fed up with bus drivers asking where they are going. (Event)

Around 75 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Transport and it was discussed at around 40 events.

General comments included that transport is vital to ensure Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can access all the other services they need, and that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users often rely heavily on public transport. Several people described particular difficulties they have faced while travelling and it was noted that there is no mention of wheelchair users who are Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.

It was also suggested that the BSL version of 'Going Further: Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework' is poor and too long.

Participate in the feedback process of the framework (Step 36)

Comments people made about this action included:

- This is important because Deaf / Deafblind BSL users need to be involved to make sure that what really matters to them is properly understood and that the support they need is provided. The Transport Accessibility Steering Group (which is part of Transport Scotland) should involve Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- The Accessible Travel Framework needs to be more informed about the roles of BSL / English interpreters and guide/communicators.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Transport Scotland should employ a BSL Communications Officer to focus on the transport goal for the Scottish Government. This person would be the main point of contact for transport businesses and would play a valuable role in improving public transport.

Provide accessible information in transport hubs (Step 37)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Although there was general support for providing accessible information in transport hubs, people also suggested that such information is needed on all public transport. There were also several comments about how the procedures and support available varies between different bus companies, train stations and airports.
- Systems to make public announcements/notifications accessible are needed for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. Transport providers need to take responsibility for people being able to complete their journey if things go wrong, including when people are using different types of transport as part of a single journey.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- contactSCOTLAND-BSL should be promoted to enable easier contact with transport providers. It should be available 24/7.
- Awareness of the Access Support Card could be increased.
- There should be more assistance and easy access to information at airports, stations, on buses and on ferries. Staff with basic BSL, better visual aids and tactile resources should be available.
- Using visual prompts in waiting areas rather than signs in English could be considered.
- There should be working induction loops on all buses.

A range of specific technological solutions were also suggested including:

- BSL phone apps for airports, train or emergency information, for taxis, and for tracking buses.
- Registering with transport providers to receive updates via texts. The registration system could be similar to the emergency SMS service.
- A video relay service supplier that can be used to get information and updates in BSL. This service should be 24/7.
- Seeking out and share examples of best practice and technological solutions in Scotland and around the world. Examples given included visual displays on Lothian Buses to indicate the address or name of street of the next stop.

Guidance when things go wrong on a journey (Step 38)

Some of the comments made under Step 37 also applied to Step 38.

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- The main problem with transport for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users is communication particularly about disruption to transport plans and unscheduled changes.

- From a safety point of view, how do ferry or train staff know there is a Deaf / Deafblind BSL user on board in the event of an emergency.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- A BSL Communications Officer could develop guidance for public transport - how, who, what, where, when to contact if their journey goes wrong.
- There needs to be a clear procedure for telling staff that you are Deaf / Deafblind. This could be like a Personal Evacuation Plan a Deaf /Deafblind person would have if they were staying in a hotel.
- Since Deafblind tactile BSL users are unable to get information when things go wrong without a companion or guide/communicator, the cost of rail travel for this companion should be free.
- Guidance is needed on how to get refunds for delayed journeys. Where to get information and how to make complaints without needing to wait for an interpreter.

Training for transport providers including for communicating with Deaf / Deafblind BSL users (Step 39)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Some train companies already have staff who can sign so others should do the same. This suggests that the 2023 target is not ambitious enough.
- Many people described difficulties, embarrassment and frustration communicating with bus drivers. A separate National Entitlement card for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users would help.
- The “hands-off” policy that prevents train staff touching a Deaf / Deafblind person to attract their attention can cause embarrassment if the alternative actions attract the attention of other passengers too. Many Deaf / Deafblind people are happy to be touched on the shoulder.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- All staff who work with the public should have Deaf Awareness and/or BSL Awareness training. There is also need for BSL awareness at senior management level, to ensure that strategies and policies do not discriminate against Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- Training must include awareness of Deafblindness. Deafblind Scotland already deliver training for ScotRail staff on how to communicate with Deafblind BSL users and this could be extended to all public transport staff who deal with passengers.
- Transport providers should have visual route maps or a list of stops at drivers’ windows so that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can point or indicate to drivers where they are getting off.

- Additional documentation could be issued to Deaf / Deafblind BSL users (including journey itinerary with the tickets) which might be presented to transport staff to explain the person's aims and limitations / challenges.

Other comments / suggestions on Transport

- If a Deafblind person requires a guide/communicator then that guide/communicator should have free travel when accompanying the Deafblind person.
- Transport should continue to be free for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users as this promotes independence.
- There should be career opportunities for Deaf BSL users in the Transport sector.
- The Scottish Government recently announced plans to explore franchising bus networks. A clear plan for ensuring accessibility for Deaf / Deafblind BSL Users could be required within any bid. This should also be explored in relation to other transport franchises.

Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts

Goal: BSL users will enjoy fair and inclusive access to Scotland's culture, leisure pursuits, sport and the arts and will have every opportunity to share their own Deaf culture with the people of Scotland.

Steps to be taken by 2023 are:

40. Encourage BSL users to take part in the culture, leisure, sport and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.
41. Support professional pathways and advocate for BSL users to consider culture, leisure, sport or the arts as a potential career choice.
42. Encourage the integration of BSL in the performing arts and film.
43. Work with the bodies delivering culture, leisure, sport and the arts to ensure that websites are easy to access and inclusive for BSL users
44. Increase the number of public events and arts programmes that have BSL interpretation.
45. Work with Historic Environment Scotland to introduce British Sign Language tours in historic buildings in order to improve access for BSL users.
46. Work to ensure that everyone is empowered to access and participate in Scotland's culture. The new Cultural Strategy will be owned by the people of Scotland and will be co-created with artists, cultural producers and anyone else with an interest across the sector and beyond.
47. Work with sportscotland to provide information on their website about good practice when working with BSL users and increase awareness and understanding about BSL.

Question 22: Do you think these are the right steps under Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts?

In total, 84 people or groups answered Question 22. Of these 79% agreed that these are the right steps under Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts, 8% disagreed, and 13% said they did not know.

Question 23 - Please tell us why you think this:

Question 24 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts were:

It's not fair if you can't go to the cinema or take part in fun things just because you use BSL. (Event)

It is good for everyone to be included and enjoy fair access to Scotland's culture, leisure pursuits, sports and arts. In the bigger picture it is an excellent opportunity for Deaf people to share the Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland. (Individual)

One of the young people we work with has spoken about his frustrations about playing football in a mainstream league - in particular about a lack of awareness from referees and the fact he can't hear the ref's whistle and often gets red-carded! Raising awareness of good practice would help in that regard. (Organisation)

Around 80 people or groups made a written / BSL comment on Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts and it was discussed at around 35 events.

General comments included that, as under other key themes, there is a concern that Deafblind people could find themselves excluded without a guide/communicator. There are also some concerns about how this part of the Plan is set out, including that it lacks detail and a delivery plan. Concerns about funding were also mentioned.

There were a small number of comments about the importance of Scottish Sign Language, including that it has not been recognised by the Scottish Government. It was suggested that the BSL National Plan should include measures to protect Scottish Sign Language as distinct from British Sign Language.

Encourage BSL users to take part in the culture, leisure, sport and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals (Step 40)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Being able to access sports and leisure activities is important and can help improve physical and mental health. These types of activities also provide good opportunities to meet other Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- Tackling barriers to participation should be the priority. For example, going to accessible cinema screenings or theatre performances can be difficult because of the limited times offered. There are often no BSL / English interpreters at sporting activities.
- Evidence suggests Deaf BSL users are more interested in supporting Deaf-led work and activities than getting access to events in 'the hearing world'.

- We need positive adult role models who are Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to encourage participation.
- Increasing the number of BSL / English interpreters for the theatre would encourage more Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to attend.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Setting up a working or users group on Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts. There could also be a Cultural BSL Communications Officer who worked with professionals in culture, leisure, sports and the arts.
- There could be an apprentice scheme for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users in cultural settings.
- New-build cultural establishments should contact Deaf / Deafblind BSL organisations for advice about Deaf / Deafblind BSL access at the planning stages.
- A national collection of BSL resources that only require minimal local alteration could be provided. This would avoid all listed authorities having to commission BSL clips on all services offered.
- Cultural and sporting activities and events could be marketed via BSL videos / film clips.

Support BSL users to consider culture, leisure, sport or the arts as a potential career choice (Step 41)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- It is not clear why this area is being singled out as a potential career choice and not some of the other areas mentioned under the Employment theme.
- Ensuring better representation of Deaf BSL users on staff at all levels across the workforce, from customer facing posts to decision-making roles, would encourage others to consider a career in one of these sectors.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Working with the Scottish Employability Programme to include opportunities in cultural organisations.
- BSL volunteers and staff should be encouraged to become BSL guides. If Deaf BSL users consider this as a potential career choice, they should be able to access training opportunities so that they can host BSL tours.

Encourage the integration of BSL in the performing arts and film (Step 42)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Should 'integration' be replaced by 'representation'?
- In addition to integrating BSL in the performing arts and films, there should be more involvement of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users in films.
- It would be better to have full Deaf theatre/Deaf plays/Deaf and BSL films.

- Creative Scotland is supporting a project for a new BSL / English interpreter training programme in theatre. This will involve BSL / English interpreters in drama and performance training so they can be fully integrated into performances in arts and film.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Events such as the 'Deaffest' Deaf film and arts festival should be held in Scotland.

Ensure that websites are easy to access and inclusive for BSL users (Step 43)

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- BSL video clips should be on the home page of websites, to save navigating the website looking for BSL versions.

Work to increase the number of public events and arts programmes that have BSL interpretation (Step 44)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- More events, for example at Edinburgh Fringe comedy festival, should be accessible for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- As local authority and school budgets are under pressure this might be challenging given the cost of providing BSL English/ interpreters for concerts and shows. Will the Scottish Government provide extra funding?
- How will these events will be promoted? Suggestions included by email, SMS (text) or Twitter, on moving advertisements (for example at stations or bus stops), on a website or Facebook, at Deaf Centres and Clubs or through a magazine.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Make sure the BSL / English interpreters booked for these events have suitable background knowledge/experience.
- Scottish Ministers should encourage the expansion of Deaf-centred programming, whether for terrestrial channels or community facilities. Local digital TV channels in Scotland should provide signing and subtitles on their programmes.
- Television BSL content at peak times needs to become normal. National televised events should include BSL / English interpretation as should BBC Scotland news, drama and children's programmes. This will promote BSL widely.
- Should some of the new resources going into BBC Scotland be directed to more BSL productions?

Work with Historic Environment Scotland to introduce British Sign Language tours in historic buildings in order to improve access for BSL users (Step 45)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- It is not clear why Historic Environment Scotland has been singled out.
- Tours should be led by Deaf volunteers or employees. Many Deaf / Deafblind BSL users already volunteer their time doing tours in BSL.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- A national training programme for Deaf BSL users who want to work in historic places and other places of interest would allow them to be employed as tour guides.
- Museums should have a portable tablet or device with BSL information on. Access should not be limited to devices or fixed displays/screens with BSL videos / film clips on the wall.
- Other people suggested a barcode / QR code app to access information in BSL in museums. Deaf / Deafblind BSL users could also download BSL videos / film clips on their own computers or smart phones prior to visiting museums.
- There should be an additional step that makes a commitment to work with or support Historic Environment Scotland to promote access to the wider historic environment, including historic places and information on the historic environment.

Work to ensure that everyone is empowered to access and participate in Scotland's culture. (Step 46)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- 'Culture' can include heritage and the historic environment - this is how the word is being used in the Plan. However, Scotland's new 'Cultural Strategy' seems to use a narrower definition. It would be useful to refer to Scotland's Strategy for the Historic Environment – Our Place in Time as well.
- Without action, Scottish Sign Language (SSL) will be lost and this is part of a Scottish BSL user's culture.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Deaf history and culture should be included within the Cultural Strategy to encourage more people to engage with BSL.
- Encouraging Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to develop BSL art and poetry and bring Deaf culture to the hearing world for them to appreciate.

Work with sportscotland to provide information on their website about good practice when working with BSL users and increase awareness and understanding about BSL (Step 47)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Everyone in the sports sector should be doing this. sportscotland should not be singled out. Other bodies where information could be shared include Scottish Student Sport and Scottish Disability Sport.
- Lots of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users are put off participating in mainstream sport. Barriers include lack of access to coaching and no funding for interpreters. Interpreters should be available for sports lessons.
- Deaf sports people have described difficulties communicating with sports bodies, including facing barriers when trying to start up new projects or applying for employment. Barriers also exist for a Deaf BSL user wanting to act as a referee.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- This step should not just be about information online, it should include participation.
- Sports coaches should be trained in BSL awareness. Staff in sport centres need BSL awareness training, as do referees.
- There should be greater encouragement and financial support for Deaf / Deafblind BSL athletes. A programme of subsidy to boost Deaf sports in Scotland would form a popular part of the National Plan. A focus on community access to sport and activity would be helpful.
- sportscotland could produce guidance for their members to improve their access for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users, both through employment and on a voluntary basis, at both local and national levels.

Justice

Goal: BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland.

Steps to be taken by 2023:

48. Assess how the justice system could better meet the needs of BSL users and carry out a plan of improvements.
49. Look at research on technologies which aim to improve BSL user access to our Justice systems.
50. We will ensure that appropriate guidance and resources are developed by the justice sector to improve understanding of and response to BSL users (this could include BSL awareness training and the development of guidance for BSL users on what they can expect in justice settings).

Question 25: Do you think these are the right steps under Justice?

In total, 87 people or groups answered Question 25. Of these 75% agreed that these are the right steps under Justice, 6% disagreed, and 20% said they did not know.

Question 26 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 27 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Justice section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about Justice were:

I think we should have the same access as hearing people but why are there always problems with the communication. It should be the same as a hearing person so why do we have the problems. (Event)

The current system is unfair as I recently got called up for Jury Duty and when I phoned up through an interpreter to explain I was deaf, I was immediately excused. Deaf and Deafblind people should have an opportunity to be involved with this as they are part of society. (Individual)

There is a policeman in the Scottish Borders who can sign at BSL Level 2, and the group thought it was wonderful. They would like Police Link Officers for Deaf People (PLOD) in England to be introduced in the Scottish Borders. (Event)

Around 85 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about Justice and it was discussed at around 35 events.

General points included that the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service and the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner are covered by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and will have to prepare and publish an authority plan. Other public bodies within the justice sector but not covered by the 2015 Act (such as Police Scotland, and the Scottish Prison Service) should ensure they have accessible information and appropriate support for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users. There may be a role for Community Justice Scotland to develop capacity within the justice system.

There have been a number of initiatives involving Deaf / Deafblind BSL users and their representative organisations working on BSL access to civil and criminal justice in Scotland. Any work carried out should build on what has come before.

Assess how the justice system could better meet the needs of BSL users and carry out a plan of improvements. (Step 48)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Many Deaf / Deafblind BSL users do not feel they currently have fair and equal access to justice systems in Scotland.
- The court setting is not easily accessible for Deafblind BSL users who need the support of a guide/communicator.
- The process for Legal Aid is insufficient and is not clear. Many solicitors will not pay for interpreters, at least until legal aid is in place.
- There are problems in the Children's Hearing system when information in printed format and legal language is provided too late to be translated into BSL.
- Although few Deaf / Deafblind BSL users have been in custody, the ageing prison population means there is likely to be an increase in the number of prisoners who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- When Deaf / Deafblind BSL users are imprisoned they often have minimal or no access to education and rehabilitation opportunities, and so parole is deferred and imprisonment continues for longer than in comparable cases.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- This step should be reworded to say 'Assess how the justice system currently meets the needs of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users and ways in which these can be improved' or 'Assess how the justice system could better meet the needs of Deaf / Deafblind BSL users, including better utilisation of technologies and carry out a plan of improvements'.
- The full range of staff working across the justice system should be encouraged to learn BSL and this should be funded by the Justice Department.

- Wider awareness and use of the Access Support Card (or similar) could improve how Police respond to Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- A similar system to the Police Link Officers for Deaf people (PLOD) currently in place in England could be considered.
- It could be helpful to look at the level and range of resources required to provide interpretation services across the whole of the justice system and then consider whether a whole-system approach could be adopted. Other options could also be looked at, such as Deaf Relay Interpreters (DRI) or Deaf Intermediaries or Deaf Advocates.
- If a court writes to a Deaf / Deafblind BSL user the letter needs to be accessible. Correspondence for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should include an accessible SMS number.

Look at research on technologies which aim to improve BSL user access to our Justice systems (Step 49)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- A lot of services fall under the Justice system and this step should cover all the different services.
- Technologies are being developed by means of contactSCOTLAND-BSL to enable Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to make initial contact with the Justice services, but these do not cover emergencies.
- Although Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can ask for a video to be taken of a police interview, would all police stations have the equipment to do this? Concerns were also raised about privacy using a webcam to communicate within justice settings.
- Technology should not replace BSL / English interpreters in court or Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should always have a choice of face-to-face or online interpreters. There are issues around the skills of Video Relay Service (VRS) BSL / English interpreters, confidentiality, and poor visual or aural quality.
- It is important that solutions are compatible with the prison setting where personal communications devices are prohibited unless an exception is made.
- Technologies to improve Deaf / Deafblind BSL user access to justice systems must align with the Digital Strategy for Justice in Scotland.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- There should be visual displays to let Deaf / Deafblind BSL users know when they are called to court.
- contactSCOTLAND-BSL hours of operation need to be extended to allow them to cover emergencies. Also, if police had an iPad or a phone app they could use contactSCOTLAND-BSL to communicate with a Deaf / Deafblind BSL user – for example at a roadside.

- There should be access to a helpline or support service to make a report in BSL for Deaf and Deafblind BSL victims of a crime.
- A PLOD should be established. This would be a team of officers who can communicate in BSL and tactile BSL and this would help build firmer bonds with BSL communities.
- The DSP or Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) could research technologies where improvements for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users have been made.

Ensure appropriate guidance and resources are developed. (Step 50)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- There are many stakeholders in the sector with different roles, responsibilities and interests. Appropriate guidance and resources will depend upon the interest, responsibility and role of the organisation within the sector.
- Very few Deaf / Deafblind BSL users have been in custody, so there will be aspects of prison service systems and processes that need to be reviewed to ensure they do not pose undue barriers. Development of guidance and resources would be welcomed.
- It is important to remember there is a wide range of BSL ability among Deaf / Deafblind people.

Suggestions people made or ideas people had included

- A national Advisory Group is needed for those stakeholders including Deaf / Deafblind BSL users and organisations who have a clear interest and contribution to make in this area.
- Identify good practice within justice services and put in place structures to share good practice and experiences across the service area. The work of Police Scotland National Equality and Diversity Unit should be recognised and used as best practice going forward.
- Should there be a Justice BSL Communications Officer? This person can work with all justice system organisations that need support, advice, information and guidance.
- All information can be translated / formatted into BSL by working with DSP and BSL presenters.

Other comments on Justice

There is no mention of juries in the Draft BSL National Plan. Several people explained that they had received a letter calling them for jury service but could not serve as interpreters are not permitted. They felt that the law needs to be changed so that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can play their part in the justice system. Also, the letter about jury service only has a contact telephone number – it should be possible to use a text/email and also the opportunity to use contactSCOTLAND-BSL.

If Deaf / Deafblind BSL users cannot be on juries, computer records should be clearly marked "Deaf / Deafblind BSL user" to indicate that they are barred from jury service and should not be called.

Democracy

BSL users should be able to represent the people of Scotland as elected politicians at a national and local level, and to serve on boards of our public bodies.

Steps to be taken by 2023:

51. Assess whether the Access to Elected Office fund met the needs of BSL users. This pilot fund offers support to cover additional costs, like BSL/English interpreting, who wish to stand for selection or election in the 2017 local government elections.
52. Offer advice and support to BSL users about how to participate in politics and to political parties and organisations about how to be more inclusive of BSL users.
53. We will raise awareness of public appointments as a way to participate in public life. We will make sure that the boards of public bodies know about BSL and the BSL National Plan and what they need to do.

BSL users should have full access to information about democracy, including voting

Steps to be taken by 2023:

54. Provide better information about voting in BSL and review whether it has been effective.
55. We will encourage political parties to produce election information in BSL.

Question 28: Do you think these are the right steps under Democracy?

In total, 79 people or groups answered Question 28. Of these, 80% agreed that these are the right steps under Democracy, 9% disagreed, and 11% said they did not know.

Question 29 - Please tell us why you think this.

Question 30 - If there are there any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Democracy section, please tell us.

Some of the comments made about democracy were:

It's important for BSL users to have access to democracy. BSL users are citizens too and pay taxes. Need lots more info in BSL to be properly included. (Event)

Helping people who use BSL to get involved in politics means that BSL users' views are represented. This will also help raise awareness of BSL. (Event)

Deaf people have the right to vote and have information in BSL. Young people are the future – they need information in BSL so that they know how to vote. (Individual)

Around 70 people or groups made a written / BSL comment about democracy and it was discussed at around 25 of the events.

Some of the general comments made included that it is very important for Deaf and Deafblind BSL users to be able to participate fully and be actively engaged in the democratic process. This includes being able to stand for elected office and, if successful, be able to represent the Deaf / Deafblind BSL communities. Someone suggested that it would be particularly good to have a Deaf BSL user Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP).

A number of people said that the goals and steps proposed should help Deaf / Deafblind BSL users be more actively involved in the democratic process but a few people commented on the amount of work that is required and that achieving these goals will be challenging. A small number of people suggested that the goals are in the wrong order and that the first and primary goal should be for all Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to be able to understand 'politics', and then vote with confidence.

A small number of people felt the goals or actions were vague and that more information is needed or a more comprehensive set of actions is required. A small number of others suggested these goals and steps may be less of a priority than some of the other issues covered in the Draft BSL National Plan.

Access to Elected Office fund (Step 51)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- It is only fair that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should be able to represent the people of Scotland as elected politicians at a national and local level. Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should have the same opportunities as anyone else to stand for an elected position. This should include bodies such as Community Councils and School Boards.

- It would be very difficult to stand for elected office without these resources being available.
- Many people do not know anything about this fund and that it is important to share information about these types of resources so people a chance to apply for them.
- It will be important to consider whether the Fund also meets the needs of Deafblind BSL users.
- There has already been work in this area, for example the Access to Democracy Project (A2D) by the SCoD, which was funded by the Electoral Commission. This could offer a potential model for any further work.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- There should be a full review of the Access to Elected Office Fund on BSL access as well as BSL participation.
- This should be a permanent fund and not just a pilot. No cap should be applied to amount of funding that can be made available. People may require several forms of communication support and the funding will need to be sufficient to allow for this.
- The Access to Elected Office fund should be extended to give people whose first or preferred language is BSL the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to stand for political office.
- Expenditure for BSL / English interpreting should be excluded from a candidate's campaign spending limits.
- A central website could share information about funds such as this. However, the information provided should be straightforward and the website should be easy to navigate. The information needs to be provide bilingually in both BSL and English.

Advice and support on participation (Step 52)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- It seems that BSL / English interpretation is not being made available at many political engagement events, such as hustings.
- Political parties have a responsibility to support any party members who are Deaf/ Deafblind BSL users and who want to stand for elected office.
- The Scottish Parliament, the UK Parliament, the European Parliament and local authorities should do all possible to ensure Deaf / Deafblind BSL users have equal access to their elected representatives.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- Information needs to be made available. For example, there should be a hub or central point of contact on providing advice, information and guidance support to Deaf / Deafblind BSL users about how to take part in politics. The

SCoD could work with the Scottish Government to develop clear resources, including offline and online BSL versions.

- BSL / English interpreters should be available at local political meetings and this should be publicised before the event to encourage more Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to come along. The Scottish Government should encourage organisations holding hustings events etc. to advertise the availability of BSL / English interpreters.
- Political parties could hold 'open days' to explain what they are looking to do and how they are going to include Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.

Appointments to public bodies (Step 53)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- It is only fair that Deaf / Deafblind BSL users should be able to serve on boards of our public bodies.
- This step is quite vague and it would be difficult to measure the effectiveness of any action taken.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The public bodies should know about BSL, staff should attend Introduction to BSL courses and have refresher courses every year. They should also need to show that they are aware of BSL and the BSL National Plan.
- Information, advice and guidance on applying needs to be available in BSL. The application process should be bilingual and BSL applications should be accepted with BSL as their first language.
- Wording about encouraging and supporting Deaf / Deafblind BSL users to seek public appointments should be added to this step.
- There should be a central fund to pay for BSL / English interpreting services at selection interviews for public or governance roles as well as to interpret such meetings if the Deaf / Deafblind BSL user was successful.

Information about voting in BSL (Step 54)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Some people may not know about the recent need to register to vote again. This information is not clear enough in general and not be accessible to Deaf / Deafblind BSL users.
- There are already resources available offline and online for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users in Scotland. The SCoD made a DVD. This was filmed in Scotland with Deaf / Deafblind BSL users in Scotland and is accessible to their regional signs.
- Providing better information about voting in BSL can be challenging. In particular, The Electoral Commission is strict and does not allow much flexibility with changing wording etc.

- Thought should be given to how a Deaf / Deafblind person is supported at the polling station, including through the use of new technology.
- It will be important to make sure that people's privacy is respected and they do not find themselves coerced into voting in a particular way.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- The role of the Electoral Commission in providing tailored information in BSL should be mentioned in the Draft BSL National Plan.
- There should be information in BSL about how councils and government works, and the process involved in elections and voting. There should also be information in BSL about how to get involved and take part in debates. This type of information should also be made available in schools.
- The signs at polling stations should be clear and staff should be trained or should have a BSL / English interpreter on site to answer any questions that a Deaf / Deafblind BSL voter may have. There should be a BSL video / film clip showing Deaf / Deafblind BSL voters how to cast a vote at all polling stations.

Election information produced by political parties (Step 55)

Comments people or groups made about this step included:

- Political parties should lead by example. Each political party should employ BSL experts to support their work with BSL communities.
- Deaf organisations have been critical about the availability of information in BSL, especially during the Referendum on Scottish Independence.

Suggestions made or ideas people or groups had included:

- This step should be changed to say that political parties must provide information in BSL.
- All manifestos and leaflets should be produced in alternative formats.
- All political broadcasts should be subtitled and have a BSL / English interpreter on screen. All Pre-election and parliamentary debates should also have a BSL / English interpreter on screen.
- It would be better to have different people interpreting or translating for different political parties. It could be confusing if different parties used the same BSL translator or BSL / English interpreters.
- There should be a central fund to pay for BSL / English interpreting services at debates and hustings, or to pay for selection interviews for public or governance roles as well as to interpret such meetings if successfully selected.

Other comments people made about democracy

- Public service, state or emergency announcements should be in BSL. There are examples of good practice by other countries, such as public

announcements with BSL / English interpreters or Deaf Video Relay interpreters (VRI) in vision and often next to the official spokesperson. BSL livestream / live filming translations of Council and other key public sector meetings should be the 'norm'.

- The focus is on how adult Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can engage with the electoral democratic process but it is also important to look at ways that young Deaf / Deafblind BSL users can become involved in participatory forms of democracy. There is no mention of how Deaf / Deafblind children and young people will be involved in the decisions that affect them and in holding Scottish Government to account.
- The Deaf Sector Partnership Youth National Advisory Group (DSP YNAG) should be involved in the development of the BSL National Plan. Members of the Youth Parliament could work with Deaf / Deafblind BSL users at school to encourage future involvement in politics.
- A good step in promoting democracy in Scotland for Deaf / Deafblind BSL users would be the establishment of a new Scottish Deaf national organisation.

Annex 1 - Organisations responding to the consultation

Aberdeenshire Council
Action on Hearing Loss Scotland
Adept Scotland
ARC Scotland - Scottish Transitions Forum
Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI)
British Deaf Association (Scotland)
Care Inspectorate
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
Creative Scotland
Deaf Action
Deaf education pathway team, School of Education, University of Edinburgh
Dirrans Centre, Sign Language group. North Ayrshire Council
Disabled Children and Young People Advisory Group
Dumfries and Galloway Council
East Ayrshire Council
Education Scotland
Equality Network
Fife Health & Social Care Partnership (Deaf Communication Service)
Glasgow City Council
Heriot-Watt University - BSL Section, Department of Languages & Intercultural Studies
Historic Environment Scotland.
Lead Scotland
National Day Nurseries Association
National Deaf Children's Society (Scotland)
National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD)
National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI)
NHS 24
NHS Ayrshire & Arran
NHS Health Scotland
NHS Highland
NHS Highland Speech and Language Therapists
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
North East Sensory Services (NESS)
North Lanarkshire Council

Police Scotland
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Scottish Ambulance Service
Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)
Scottish Council on Deafness
Scottish Councils Equality Network (SCEN)
Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS)
Scottish Disability Equality Forum SDEF
Scottish Funding Council
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Prison Service
See Me
Signature
Solar Bear
South Ayrshire Council
Stirling Council – Education
Stirling Council – Equalities
The Butterfly Project
The City of Edinburgh Council
The Highland Council
The Law Society of Scotland
The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
University of Dundee
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow
University of Strathclyde
University of the Highlands and Islands
Young people studying BSL in Dingwall Academy
YouthLink Scotland

Annex 2 - Answers at Yes/No questions

This annex sets out the answers given at each of the Yes/No questions asked. These answers come from the standard responses received (those submitted through Citizen Space or as an email). Some people only answered some of the questions. This means that the number of people answering changes from question to question.

Table 1: Question 1 – Do you think these are the right steps under Public Services?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	51	75%	7	10%	10	15%	68
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	3		1		1		5
<i>Local Government</i>	10		4				14
<i>Other</i>	4						4
<i>Public Body</i>	11		1				12
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	2		1				3
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	5				1		6
All organisations	35	80%	7	16%	2	5%	44
All respondents	86	77%	14	13%	12	11%	112

In total, 112 respondents answered Question 1. Of these 77% agreed that these are the right steps under Public Services, 13% disagreed, and 11% said they did not know.

Table 2: Question 4 – Do you think these are the right steps under Early Years?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	55	80%	4	6%	10	14%	69
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	2		1		2		5
<i>Local Government</i>	11		3				14
<i>Other</i>	2		1				3
<i>Public Body</i>	7		1		2		10
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	1						1
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	5						5
All organisations	28	74%	6	16%	4	11%	38
All respondents	83	78%	10	9%	14	13%	107

In total, 107 respondents answered Question 4. Of these 78% agreed that these are the right steps under Early Years, 9% disagreed, and 13% said they did not know.

Table 3: Question 7 – Do you think these are the right steps under Education?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	52	72%	12	17%	8	11%	72
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	3		1		1		5
<i>Local Government</i>	11		2				13
<i>Other</i>	2		1				3
<i>Public Body</i>	8		1		1		10
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	1						1
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	4		1				5
All organisations	29	78%	6	16%	2	5%	37
All respondents	81	74%	18	17%	10	9%	109

In total, 109 respondents answered Question 7. Of these 74% agreed that these are the right steps under Education, 17% disagreed, and 9% said they did not know.

Table 4: Question 10 – Do you think these are the right steps under Post-School Education?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	47	80%	8	14%	4	7%	59
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	4		2		1		7
<i>Local Government</i>	12				1		13
<i>Other</i>	2		2				4
<i>Public Body</i>	6		1		2		9
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	1						1
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	5		1				6
All organisations	30	75%	6	15%	4	10%	40
All respondents	77	78%	14	14%	8	8%	99

In total, 99 respondents answered Question 10. Of these 78% agreed that these are the right steps under Post-School Education, 14% disagreed, and 8% said they did not know.

Table 5: Question 13 – Do you think these are the right steps under Employment?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	47	78%	6	10%	7	12%	60
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	3				2		5
<i>Local Government</i>	14						14
<i>Other</i>	3		1				4
<i>Public Body</i>	10				2		12
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	1						1
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	6						6
All organisations	37	88%	1	2%	4	10%	42
All respondents	84	82%	7	7%	11	11%	102

In total, 102 respondents answered Question 13. Of these 82% agreed that these are the right steps under Employment, 7% disagreed, and 11% said they did not know.

Table 6: Question 16 – Do you think these are the right steps under Health, Mental Health and Social Care?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	47	72%	8	12%	10	15%	65
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	1		1		1		3
<i>Local Government</i>	8		2		3		13
<i>Other</i>	5						5
<i>Public Body</i>	7				3		10
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	1						1
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	5						5
All organisations	27	73%	3	8%	7	19%	37
All respondents	74	73%	11	11%	17	17%	102

In total, 102 respondents answered Question 16. Of these 73% agreed that these are the right steps under Health, Mental Health and Social Care, 11% disagreed, and 17% said they did not know.

Table 7: Question 19 – Do you think these are the right steps under Transport?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	45	85%	3	6%	5	9%	53
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	2				1		3
<i>Local Government</i>	13				1		14
<i>Other</i>	3						3
<i>Public Body</i>	6				1		7
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>							0
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	3						3
All organisations	27	90%		0%	3	10%	30
All respondents	72	87%	3	4%	8	10%	83

In total, 83 respondents answered Question 19. Of these 87% agreed that these are the right steps under Transport, 4% disagreed, and 10% said they did not know.

Table 8: Question 22 – Do you think these are the right steps under Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	41	82%	5	10%	4	8%	50
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	2				2		4
<i>Local Government</i>	8		1		4		13
<i>Other</i>	2						2
<i>Public Body</i>	9		1		1		11
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	1						1
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	3						3
All organisations	25	74%	2	6%	7	21%	34
All respondents	66	79%	7	8%	11	13%	84

In total, 84 respondents answered Question 22. Of these 79% agreed that these are the right steps under Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Arts, 8% disagreed, and 13% said they did not know.

Table 9: Question 25 – Do you think these are the right steps under Justice?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	38	76%	5	10%	7	14%	50
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	2				2		4
<i>Local Government</i>	10				4		14
<i>Other</i>	3				1		4
<i>Public Body</i>	8				3		11
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>	1						1
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	3						3
All organisations	27	73%		0%	10	27%	37
All respondents	65	75%	5	6%	17	20%	87

In total, 87 respondents answered Question 25. Of these 75% agreed that these are the right steps under Justice, 6% disagreed, and 20% said they did not know.

Table 10: Question 28 – Do you think these are the right steps under Democracy?

Type of respondent	Yes		No		Don't know		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
All individuals	38	78%	6	12%	5	10%	49
Organisations:							
<i>Academic/research</i>	2				1		3
<i>Local Government</i>	9		1		3		13
<i>Other</i>	3						3
<i>Public Body</i>	8						8
<i>Representative Body for Professionals</i>							0
<i>Third Sector/Deaf Organisation</i>	3						3
All organisations	25	83%	1	3%	4	13%	30
All respondents	63	80%	7	9%	9	11%	79

In total, 79 respondents answered Question 28. Of these 80% agreed that these are the right steps under Democracy, 9% disagreed, and 11% said they did not know.



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