

From: **[Redacted]**
Equality & Human Rights
16 July 2020

Minister for Children & Young People

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose

1. To outline a proposal to delay the preparation of the BSL Progress Report due to be submitted to the Scottish Parliament in October 2020.

Priority

2. Routine. It would be helpful to have confirmation of the Minister's decision before the end of July in order to be able to support handling.

Background

3. Under the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 there is a duty for the Scottish Ministers to prepare, lay and publish a progress report by 27 October 2020. This is to set out the Scottish Ministers' views as to progress made by relevant public authorities in relation to the promotion, and facilitation of promotion, of British Sign Language in Scotland.

4. In conjunction with BSL Partnership organisations and stakeholders, officials drew up a timeline of stakeholder engagement activity required to gather feedback and evidence to support the preparation of the progress report, which was shared and agreed with the Minister in January. A summary of this timeline is at Annex A, which also includes updates on progress in undertaking this work.

5. The COVID-19 crisis has impacted on delivery of work and the majority of the engagement activity planned, and evidence-gathering, has not taken place as planned. This is because engagement was due to take place in person at deaf clubs around Scotland, or through engagement by the BSL partner organisations with their different communities. Much of this work was postponed as the focus of their work was changed to provide accessible information and advice to BSL users and deaf blind community as part of the COVID response.

6. The Equality & Human Rights Division has undertaken a significant reprioritisation process as requested by Ministers to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Due to significant pressures on the Division, there is a need to prioritise work in a range of areas and ensure the best utilisation of limited resources.

Proposal

7. **[Redacted]**

8. There is a mechanism available to publish a statement to delay the progress report, although the report must be published as soon as reasonably practicable.

9. This option, assuming face to face gatherings can resume during this period, would allow work to take place around preparation and publication, particularly in relation to stakeholder and community engagement. This would result in a better-informed report that is more reflective of the progress being made with BSL.

10. There is a requirement to prepare and publish a new BSL National Plan in 2023 so we will need to be mindful that a delay now will shorten the time span in which to report progress.

Recommendation & conclusion

11. Our recommendation is therefore that we delay with preparing and publishing a progress report to October 2021, but we should seek to reaffirm our commitment to the British Sign Language National Plan in the meantime. We would work with internal policy and communications teams, as well as the BSL partners, to produce a handling plan for messaging around the delay to the publication of the report. We will continue to commit to outstanding actions in the current BSL National Plan and work towards progressing them insofar as possible.

12. You are invited to:

- i. Indicate if you are content with the recommendation to delay a report to October 2021

[Redacted]

Equality & Human Rights

[Redacted]

16 July 2020

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
Deputy First Minister & Cabinet Secretary for Education					X
Cabinet Secretary for Social Security & Older People					X
Minister for Older People & Equalities					X

DG Education, Communities & Justice
 Stephen Gallagher
 Lisa Bird
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
 Communications DFM & Education

Communications SSE

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

ANNEX A

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) PROGRESS REPORT

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT PLAN & STATUS AS OF JULY 2020

Phase	Time	Activity	Status/comment
Community engagement	End February – April 2020	Outreach with general BSL community by the British Deaf Association through local deaf clubs or events	Behind schedule. Only one engagement event has taken place, in Inverness, (prior to lockdown) with several other events cancelled.
	March – May 2020	Outreach with young deaf people & families led by the National Deaf Children's Society	Delayed due to cancellation of a planned event, but there are plans to engage with some families through one-to-one virtual meetings.
	March – May 2020	Outreach with deafblind people led by Deafblind Scotland, with support from the British Deaf Association	Behind schedule.
	March – May 2020	Outreach with deaf students led by Deaf Action	Behind schedule due to closure of education institutions.
	May 2020	Engagement with BSL/English interpreting practitioners/community	No progress – discussions not yet started.
Public sector engagement	March – June 2020	Analyse BSL Plans & Outcomes Agreements for FE/HE institutions. Gather feedback, and examples of good practice and areas for development. This work is being led by Deaf Action & the Scottish Funding Council	Behind schedule but there are plans to undertake some work over the summer, dependent on availability of staff at education institutions and at Scottish Funding Council.
	March – June 2020	Scottish Government Equality Unit to follow up with relevant policy areas to obtain updates on BSL National Plan actions	Delayed due to prioritising COVID-19 work & associated pressures across Scottish Government.
	April – June 2020	Gather feedback, and examples of good practice and areas for development, from local authorities. This work is being led by the British Deaf Association	On track but some local authorities have been unable to contribute yet due to staffing challenges.
	April – June 2020	Gather feedback, and examples of good practice and areas for development, from NHS Boards & other public bodies. This work is being led by the British Deaf Association	On track but it is expected that a significant focus of activity will have been related to COVID-19.

[Redacted], Equality & Human Rights
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ANNEX B

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