

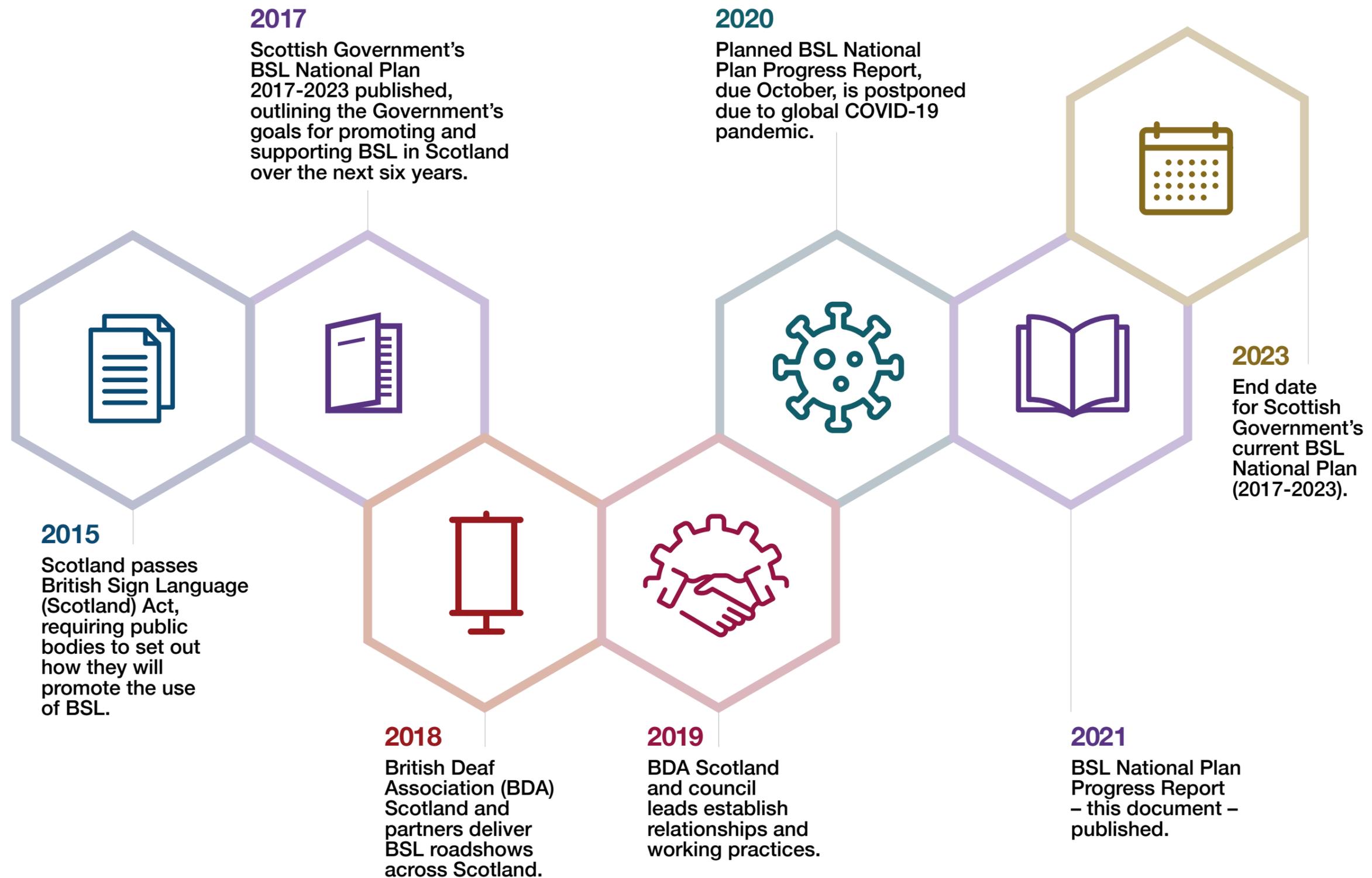


Scottish Government
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Scottish Government
British Sign Language (BSL)
Progress Report
2021



Where we are now



Our ten long-term goals



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1. Ministerial foreword



Clare Haughey
Minister for Children
and Young People

I am pleased to publish the Scottish Government's first British Sign Language National Plan Progress Report.

We are just over halfway through Scotland's first ever BSL National Plan. Published in 2017 and covering the six years up to 2023, the Plan demonstrated the Scottish Government's commitment to making Scotland the best place in the world for BSL signers to live, work, learn and visit.

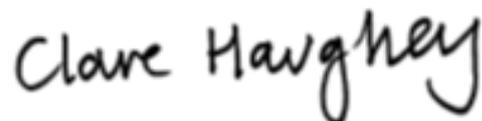
This Report details the progress made since the Plan was published, and identifies some of the work that remains to be done. Its publication has been delayed by a year as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, though work to support and promote BSL has not been put on hold – indeed, the Scottish Government is proud to have integrated the use of BSL into much of its response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The National Plan identified ten long-term ambitions for us to work towards, and defined seventy specific and measurable actions which we hoped would be achieved before the end of its lifetime. I am pleased to report that the majority of the actions have been put into effect, and have either been completed, or are ongoing as this Report is published. In almost all areas of public life in Scotland, significant progress has been made in promoting BSL, in making the language better understood and respected, and in improving access to services and support for BSL signers.

BSL Partnership organisations have played a vital role in the work that has been achieved to date. I would particularly like to thank British Deaf Association Scotland, Deafblind Scotland, the National Deaf Children's Society Scotland and Deaf Action for their work. These organisations and others have been invaluable in contributing expertise and support, and in helping the Government, local authorities and other public bodies in building relationships with the BSL community.

As detailed in the SNP manifesto we will support local authorities by providing additional funding to enable them to offer free British Sign Language tuition for deaf children from the age of five.

There remains a great deal of work to do, both in the last years of the current National Plan period and beyond. The Scottish Government and its partner bodies and organisations are committed to BSL, and to ensuring signers can access opportunities in their first and preferred language. We will continue to promote and support the teaching and use of BSL as one of Scotland's vibrant indigenous languages.



Clare Haughey
Minister for Children
and Young People

2. Introduction

This Report details progress made in the promotion of BSL in Scotland since the publication of the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan for 2017-2023.



The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users* to live, work, learn and visit. This will be realised when people who use BSL as their first or preferred language are fully involved in all aspects of public life.

The BSL National Plan 2017 to 2023 was developed by a National Advisory Group, which includes D/deaf and Deafblind BSL signers, parents of D/deaf ^children, representatives from public bodies, and other stakeholders. The Plan sets out ten long-term goals and 70 practical actions for the promotion and support of BSL use in Scotland.

The National Plan covers the Scottish Government and 50 public bodies where Scottish Ministers hold responsibility. Other organisations, including local councils, NHS Boards, colleges and universities have published their own plans.

The publication of this Progress Report has been delayed by COVID-19. BSL has been embedded in the Scottish Government's reaction to the pandemic, for example in the presence of BSL interpreters at televised daily briefings. This has helped raise the profile of the language, and demonstrated commitment to its use.

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

^D/deaf is often used to inclusively refer to Deaf people who use sign language as their first or preferred language and deaf people who prefer to use English as their first or preferred language (via lip-reading or assistive technology)

3. Key successes

Achievements so far

The Scottish Government has long-term ambitions for BSL. Achieving these goals in full will require action over many years, continuing well beyond the end date of the current National Plan. However, we are already able to point to important achievements which lay foundations for future progress.





In Education

BSL is a vibrant and important language, and the Scottish Government is committed to supporting its use in schools, colleges and universities. We are working to expand opportunities, and to ensure that BSL users are able to achieve their full potential within Scottish education, both as teachers and as learners.

- ◆ The Scottish Government established an expert advisory group in 2019 to develop plans to promote BSL use in schools.
- ◆ A 2019 survey reported that schools across ten local authorities were delivering BSL as a second additional language (L3), a doubling since the previous survey.
- ◆ The Scottish Qualifications Authority now offers a range of qualifications in BSL, from SCQF levels 3 to 8, designed for both hearing and deaf learners.
- ◆ The Northern Alliance of local authorities is introducing a BSL course for primary teachers in partnership with the Open University, with a pilot scheduled for the end of 2021.
- ◆ Queen Margaret University has embedded basic BSL tuition in its Initial Teacher Education provision.
- ◆ The University of Edinburgh is planning a new MA in Primary Education and BSL, which will prepare teachers for BSL immersion settings, and for teaching BSL as a language following the 1+2 policy.
- ◆ For children who are born deaf, the Scottish Government is developing BSL resources and advice within key programmes such as the BookBug app, where we've commissioned original BSL content from deaf artists.

BSL/English Interpreting

As we work towards widespread understanding of BSL in the wider community, BSL/English interpreters will play an important role in bridging the gap between users and non-users. Progress in supporting interpreters and interpreting includes:

- ◆ A comprehensive review of BSL/English interpreting in Scotland, carried out in 2019 – [Landscape Review – BSL Scotland Act 2015](#).
- ◆ Postgraduate modules on specialist areas of BSL/English interpreting, including healthcare, mental healthcare, justice and education, at Queen Margaret University, supported by funding from the Scottish Government.
- ◆ A pilot to test an initial model of internships for newly-qualified BSL/English interpreters in public services, funded by the Scottish Government. Promoting Equal Access to Services (PEAS) was delivered between 2017 and 2019 by Heriot-Watt University, in partnership with Police Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde.

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Coronavirus has had a dramatic impact on public life, but BSL hasn't been overlooked during the pandemic. Here are some ways the language has been promoted and supported during these challenging times.

- ◆ A BSL/English interpreter at the daily Scottish Government Coronavirus briefings, more BSL in social media posts, and a range of important health information in BSL from NHS Inform. [British Sign Language \(BSL\) | Translations \(nhsinform.scot\)](#)
- ◆ Funding for organisations to help respond to the Coronavirus pandemic has included support for British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland to provide information in BSL. This has included regular video briefings and weekly livestreams in BSL.
- ◆ Communication work around the pandemic has ensured BSL signers in Scotland and beyond have been able to access information on an equal basis in their own language. This has attracted positive feedback, including from the European Union of the Deaf.



In Public Life and Society

Since the implementation of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, the Scottish Government has funded BSL Partnership organisations to play a significant role in engaging and supporting public bodies with their BSL plans, while encouraging them to build effective relationships with their local BSL communities. Progress in public life include:

- In 2022, Scotland's Census will ask 'can you use BSL?' for the first time. This will provide important, up-to-date statistics on knowledge and use of the language in Scotland.
- Work has been carried out to help make the Census 2022 website accessible to BSL users.
- In October 2020 and as a result of the pandemic, the publication of this Progress Report was postponed. In lieu, Partner organisations published a number of interim findings highlighting good practice across the Scottish public sector. Examples include more information in BSL, the setting up of a Health Champions Forum, and better links between public bodies and the BSL community.
- The employment of people from the Deaf/BSL community is progressing, with a new focus on BSL policy and work, including apprenticeships and other opportunities.
- The BSL Partnership has employed a number of people from the BSL community as part of its work. Research by the British Deaf Association (BDA) has shown that employing signers within public bodies has a significant positive impact on the profile and understanding of BSL.

4. Public services

4.1 Progress In Public Services

Over the four years since the launch of the current BSL National Plan we've witnessed significant progress across Government, local authorities and other public bodies. At the same time, the challenges facing us over the coming years have been brought into sharp focus.



As part of the Local Government Finance Resettlement, local authorities received funding equating to £21,000 per authority over the four years from 2018 to 2021. This supported the development of the first-ever Authority BSL Plans, which were drawn up with the invaluable input of local BSL communities.

In 2020, BDA Scotland conducted a series of interviews with local authorities. These were structured around five questions about practice and progress in BSL use and support. The questions were

- Do you feel the action points under the BSL Plan are on track?
- Can you share examples of progress achieved since 2017?
- Do you face challenges or issues in promoting the BSL Plan?
- Have you considered work required from 2021 to the end of the Plan period?
- What support would you welcome from BDA Scotland?



Some key developments identified from this survey include:

- All local authorities had published their BSL Authority Plans in written English and 30 had published their Plans in BSL.
- 16 local authorities had implemented some sections of the Local Authority Plan.
- 5 local authorities had established Deaf and/or BSL Awareness training for staff.
- During the COVID-19 crisis, 27 local authorities translated information into BSL for their online platforms.
- Angus and Dundee City Councils have pooled resources to train BSL users in presentation skills.
- Perth & Kinross Council produced a BSL video for their Christmas programme in 2019.



4.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Updates from June 2021
1	Develop and test a new question on the use of BSL in Scotland for potential inclusion in Scotland's Census. This will give us a more accurate profile of Scotland's BSL users*.	<p>“Can you use BSL?” will be included as a question in the Census.</p> <p>Inclusion of this question follows a period of question development and testing.</p> <p>More specific information on the results of BSL question testing are available in the Language Topic Report which can be found on the Scotland's Census website.</p> <p>National Records of Scotland responsible for conducting Scotland's (postponed) Census 2022.</p>
2	Analyse existing evidence and gather further data about BSL, so that we can establish baselines and measure how we are making progress.	Due to COVID-19 the main source of BSL data in Scotland is still the 2011 Census. The 2011 results are analysed in this report .



Action No.	Action	Updates from June 2021
3	<p>Develop, test and share a set of guidelines to help Scottish public services to improve access to information and services for BSL users. This will include advice on how to involve BSL users in the design and delivery of Scotland's public services.</p>	<p>A Guide and Tool has been developed (using advice and guidance from the BSL community) that lets BSL users know of upcoming research events. It informs BSL users of Scottish Government User Centred Design (UCD) events or research activities signed in BSL and how to contact the project group. This is used by the Digital Directorate a UCD community and has been shared with others in the public sector as an example. Social Security have used the tool. The guide has been provided as an example to other researchers in the public sector. Currently it can't be used outside Scottish Government's Digital Directorate but, other stakeholders can use it as an example. Feedback is welcome to assist ongoing improvement.</p>
4	<p>Work with BSL users* to agree and begin a programme of work to increase the accessibility of the 'mygov.scot' website. This website enables citizens to access a range of public information and services online</p>	<p>Mygov.scot has been reviewed by the Accessibility Team from the Office of the Chief Designer, which has led to improvements in the general accessibility abilities of the site. Continuous improvements will be useful to BSL users in the future.</p>

Action No.	Action	Updates from June 2021
5	<p>Promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service (VRS) ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’, which allows BSL users* to contact public and third sector services and for these services to contact them and explore the potential for its greater use.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government funds contactSCOTLAND-BSL – the BSL online interpreting Video Relay Service, which enables Deaf and Deafblind British Sign Language (BSL) users to telephone, via video relay interpreters, private sector numbers as well as statutory and third sector numbers, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service is provided by Sign Language Interactions (SLI) on behalf of the Scottish Government and it offers BSL users the means to communicate in real-time, with services and family and friends. Services, family and friends can also use this service to contact BSL users. The numbers of calls has risen sharply since January 2020 due to the impact of the coronavirus, and continue to rise. (There was an increase of 143% in the number of calls relayed in January 2021 compared with January 2020.) Almost half of additional calls relayed during the pandemic have been to the NHS.</p>



Action No.	Action	Updates from June 2021
6	Encourage public bodies to access BSL awareness training for staff who may work with BSL users*.	Following publication of the BSL National Plan, a series of roadshows and engagement events were organised by the BSL Partnership. These were open to all public bodies and well-attended. As part of these, BSL Awareness training was flagged as a key enabler. Following this, the BSL Partnership organisations have had specific remits to support groups of public bodies (e.g. Local Authorities and NHS Boards) and this has included advice, guidance and signposting on BSL Awareness topics and issues. Work is ongoing.



Action No.	Action	Updates from June 2021
7	<p>Review a range of current and on-going Scottish and UK evidence about the BSL/English interpreting landscape (for example the UK Market Review of BSL and communication provision, and the Scottish Government funded review of the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)).</p>	<p>The ‘BSL Interpreting in Scotland: Landscape review’ was commissioned by the Scottish Government and undertaken by Queen Margaret University. The final report was published on 5th February, 2020 and researched the below topics through surveys and interviews with: interpreters and trainee interpreters, registration and membership bodies, the interpreters union, agencies and training providers. The research covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The current interpreter progression routes to registration, and post registration career options; ● Geographical mapping of interpreters’ working locations; ● How interpreters source assignments; and ● Barriers to interpreters’ professional practice.
8	<p>Analyse the learning from actions we are taking forward in health, education and justice (referred to in this plan) to strengthen Scotland’s interpreting profession.</p>	<p>The analysis work will be taken forward in the next two years and be shared with the interpreting profession in appropriate ways, including with interpreter trainers.</p>

Action No.	Action	Updates from June 2021
9	Consider what further work is needed to ensure that a strong and skilled pool of BSL/English interpreters are working efficiently across Scotland.	The 'BSL Interpreting in Scotland: Landscape review' was commissioned by the Scottish Government to identify steps that could strengthen the BSL/English interpreting profession in Scotland. Some of the report's recommendations are for the Scottish Government to consider, whilst others are for the wider BSL interpreting sector to take forward. An initial gathering of key stakeholders (registration bodies, membership associations, training providers & the national BSL/English National Interpreting Union) took place in November 2019 to directly consider their commendations; further collaborative work was planned for 2020 but due to the COVID-19 pandemic this has been delayed.



5. Family support, early learning, childcare

5.1 Progress in family support, early learning and childcare BSL is a primary language within many families where one or more members is D/deaf or Deafblind, and vital in the way those families interact and communicate with service providers and others in the wider community. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting families in learning, using and accessing information in the language, and several actions were included in the 2017 Plan.



The Scottish Government has worked with leading partners to support parents of deaf children, to improve access to information for families, and to develop teaching material for early years learning.

- Early learning and childcare information has been translated into BSL and shared through partner organisations.
- A suite of free, online continuing professional learning (CPL) modules have been developed to support understanding and use of BSL in an Early Learning context.
- The Scottish Booktrust has developed BSL content for their Bookbug app, with financial support from the Scottish Government.
- The Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) fund has provided training, resources and equipment to support BSL training and use.



5.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
10	Improve access to early years services for parents whose child is diagnosed as D/deaf or Deafblind by developing information about BSL and Deaf culture for service providers who support parents, such as health visitors.	The early learning and childcare information leaflet has now been translated into BSL and shared via partners.
11	Assist 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 consulting with BSL users* and other stakeholders to assess the most appropriate digital platforms for signposting and disseminating information.	To support professionals working in the ELC sector to further build and specialise their skills, the Scottish Government has worked with leading partners to develop a suite of free, online, continued professional learning (CPL) modules. This includes the module 'Building confidence in identifying and responding to additional support needs' . The guidance regarding BSL is additionally included in the webinar which is recorded and made available to learners who were unable to attend. Evaluation shows learners respond and interact this.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
12	Develop BSL resources and advice within key programmes such as 'BookBug' so that parents can be supported to interact with their child during this critical developmental phase.	To help support parents to interact with their children during the critical development ages of 0 – 5 the Scottish Government has provided funding to the Scottish Booktrust to develop BSL content for their Bookbug App. 'Mac, Pip and the Falling Stars' was launched in May 2021, and has had almost 15,000 downloads so far. Another BSL book is in production currently, building on this content.
13	Work with partners to determine the best way of enabling families and carers to learn BSL so that they can communicate effectively with their D/deaf or Deafblind child in the crucial early years (0-8 years).	Identifying and forming relevant partnerships to take this multidisciplinary area forward has been challenging, and was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we continue to recover from COVID-19 it will be important to raise awareness about how crucial it is for families and carers to be able to learn BSL, accessing resources as early as possible. We will identify key partners to progress this action further.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
14	Test out a new approach to supporting older D/deaf and Deafblind children (8 years +) and young people, and their families to learn BSL.	This action will be reviewed with relevant stakeholders to determine specific needs and approaches in learning BSL for children in this age group and their families and carers. This information will be used to plan and test a suitable approach.
15	Ensure that children and/or parents/carers who use BSL can benefit from the new £2 million Inclusion Fund, as part of the increase in early learning and childcare provision.	The ELC Inclusion Fund is a £2 million multiyear fund that supports children with additional support needs to access their funded ELC entitlement ELC settings can apply for funding for training, resources and equipment including BSL training for practitioners to support D/deaf or Deafblind children in their care. To date the fund has distributed over £1.5 million to support children with additional support needs to access funded ELC. BSL training is eligible for funding on an individual basis.



6. School education

6.1 Progress in schools

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting and developing the use of BSL as a language for teaching and learning, and as an integrated element of education at all levels in Scotland. For schools, the National Plan sets out a number of actions intended to promote the use of the language among D/deaf students and teachers, as well as a wider understanding and appreciation of BSL among hearing students and the wider community.



Work by local authorities, education departments, individual schools and other public and third sector bodies has achieved a great deal since the Plan was launched in 2017. Inevitably the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on plans and more work will be required between now and 2023, but important foundations have been laid and the status of BSL in schools is now stronger than ever.

Some key developments in schools include:

- The Scottish Government has worked with partners to develop a suite of free, online continued professional learning (CPL) modules, including guidance on BSL.
- The Scottish Booktrust developed BSL content for their Bookbug App, with funding from the Scottish Government.
- The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) now offers qualifications in BSL from level 3 to level 8.
- Scotland's National Centre for Languages convened an Expert Advisory Group to look at BSL learning.
- Schools across ten local authorities reported delivering BSL at L3 in 2019, double the number in the previous survey.

- Queen Margaret University has embedded basic BSL tuition in its Initial Teacher Education provision.
- The University of Edinburgh is planning a new MA in Primary Education and BSL, which will prepare teachers for BSL immersion settings, and for teaching BSL as a language following the 1+2 policy.

The Plan recognises that it is important for teachers and school authorities to engage with parents who use BSL.

- Education Scotland has been working to share examples of good practice in working with BSL-using parents. A case study at Moorfoot Primary School was published in October 2020, with a toolkit of Good Practice published the following month.
- BSL Content is now available on Parentzone Scotland's website, where YouTube videos of BSL signing are being developed for each page.

For teachers, the Plan sets out actions to research BSL knowledge and promote its use, as well as to support BSL users in becoming teachers and progressing their careers. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) is working with the University of Edinburgh to develop a new MA in Primary Education with BSL.

6.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
16	Work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to remove barriers that make it difficult for BSL users* to become registered teachers.	The GTCS is working with the University of Edinburgh to develop a new undergraduate degree in MA Primary Education and British Sign Language, which would lead to teachers qualifying as primary school teachers with enhanced skills in BSL. GTCS is considering further action that would remove barriers that make it difficult for BSL users to become registered teachers, including reviewing registration rules.



Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
17	Undertake additional investigations into the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff working with D/deaf and Deafblind pupils in schools.	<p>The Qualification of Teachers of pupils with visual impairment, or pupils with hearing impairment or pupils with multi-sensory impairment (vision and hearing impairment) was published in Oct 2016. A small working group was set up in January 2019 to review the competency guidance for Teachers of the Deaf (QToD) and Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI). Members of the group are Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC), Scottish Government (SG) and General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) have been kept up to date with the group's work.</p> <p>Next steps: General Teaching Council for Scotland to align the competency guidance to the 2020 General Teaching Council for Scotland standards. There have been delays in progressing this work due to the impact of COVID-19 and the focus on education recovery. The guidance will be prepared to go out for public consultation Autumn 2021 with a view to publishing Winter 2021.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
18	Work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to review the guidance it provides to teachers of pupils who use BSL.	GTCS have no role in issuing guidance to teachers. Therefore work will be carried out to explore this further and consider how this guidance can be developed.
19	Work with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to develop an initial suite of awards in BSL, which will form the basis for any future development of BSL qualifications up to Level 6 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).	The SQA now offers a range of BSL qualifications from SCQF level 3 to SCQF level 8. These have been designed for both hearing and deaf learners to develop their language skills. This can benefit hearing learners of BSL in particular, by improving both their language fluency and understanding of the Sign Language Community. The new course being developed by the University of Edinburgh (see action 16 above) will create a group of primary school teachers who can teach in BSL which will be a significant asset to our primary school system.
20	Work with Education Scotland to share advice and examples of good practice for education professionals and support staff about how to engage effectively with parents who use BSL.	The Moorfoot Primary School case study exemplifying good practice for professionals was published in October 2020. The Good Practice in working with deaf learners, their parents and families and toolkit was published in November 2020. (See also, No 23 below)

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
21	Work with BSL users* to develop information and advice about how parents who use BSL can get further involved in their child's learning. This work will be led by Education Scotland.	<p>Progress is well underway. Education Scotland have worked with BSL users, parents, practitioners and national Deaf organisations. Information and advice has now been developed to help BSL users get more involved in their children's learning. Content is now available on Parentzone Scotland website. Arrangements are being made to have YouTube video links on each page with the text signed. The work should be completed by October 2021. Content for BSL users will continue to be developed beyond the duration of the current BSL National Action Plan, e.g. a toolkit for practitioners that could sit on the above good practice case study.</p>



Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
22	Seek the views of parents who use BSL when we revise legislation about parental involvement in education.	<p>The plans for an Education Bill were not taken forward in 2019, and there are no current plans to amend primary legislation on parental involvement, and therefore this action can no longer be taken forward. Decisions on potential updates to statutory guidance or the broader regulatory and good practice framework are dependent on decisions regarding the next phase of policy work in this area. The Scottish Government, does, however, give a commitment to ensure that the communication needs of BSL using parents as a key consultation group will be supported as part of any consultations on major changes to education policy or legislation relating to parental involvement or engagement in education.</p>



Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
23	<p>Instruct Scotland’s National Centre for Languages (SCILT) to lead a programme of work to support BSL learning for hearing pupils. This will include, but will not be limited to:</p> <p>a) making sure that education authorities and schools know that BSL can be part of the language offer in schools under the 1+2 language policy.</p> <p>b) Gathering detailed information on where and how BSL is being offered in schools as part of the 1+2 language policy, and update this information regularly.</p> <p>c) Gathering and sharing examples of good practice in teaching BSL to hearing pupils as part of 1+2, and make sure there is guidance to support this.</p>	<p>a) Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activities including the promotion of BSL as part of the 1+2 languages policy had to be reprioritised. Previous communication and promotion included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A presentation on BSL at a meeting of the Languages Network Group Scotland (LANGS), one of the country’s main language stakeholder groups, with local authority representatives in attendance. ◆ Highlighting BSL as a second additional language (L3) option in a report on the 2019 local authority survey of 1+2 implementation (see response to 23b). ◆ Showcasing BSL at the launch event of Languages Week Scotland 2020, held in February 2020, which was attended by the Deputy First Minister, local authority representatives, school teachers and pupils. <p>Furthermore, the Northern Alliance (a Regional Improvement Collaborative) has reported organising a BSL course for primary teachers in partnership with the Open University, which is expected to be piloted towards the end of 2021.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>b) Information on local authorities' implementation of the 1+2 languages policy is gathered annually through a survey conducted in partnership with COSLA, ADES, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government.</p> <p>In the most recent survey, carried out in 2019, schools across 10 local authorities reported that they delivered BSL as an L3. This represents a doubling of local authorities from the previous survey, showing that good progress is being made in the uptake of BSL. It should be noted that schools are likely to only offer BSL as an L3 to their hearing learners, as there are no National Qualifications in BSL for it to be taught as a first additional language (L2).</p> <p>A report on the 2019 survey is available. A survey was not carried out in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however one is planned for 2021.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>c) Scotland’s National Centre for Languages has worked with Education Scotland to develop a case study on BSL with family learning. This has been designed to promote and raise awareness of BSL and its potential as a second additional language in schools under the 1+2 policy. The Moorfoot Primary School and Garvel Deaf Centre case study explains how BSL is being used to engage parents in their children’s learning, improve communications across the whole school, and engage with the wider deaf community.</p>
<p>24</p>	<p>Assemble an expert advisory group to support this work. This will include recommendations for a longer term strategy to support the teaching of BSL to hearing pupils, and gathering data to measure progress. This will be led by SCILT, and will report to the Scottish Government by 2020</p>	<p>An expert advisory group was established by the Scottish Government in 2019 to develop a delivery plan for growing the provision of BSL in schools, with SCILT chairing the group. The group was unable to report to the Scottish Government in 2020 due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to the work of the group being postponed, and it last met in January 2020.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
25	<p>Expect all colleges and universities will publish BSL plans, setting out how students who use BSL are supported, with a clear measurable commitment to improvement where necessary. These plans link with college and university outcome agreements and will be reviewed annually by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), to ensure that inequalities experienced by D/deaf and Deafblind BSL students are being addressed.</p>	<p>This action was progressed and reported to the SFC BSL Steering Group. The latest assessment was undertaken in October 2019. The outcome agreements at that time covered up to 2022. Institutions are expected to update these agreements annually but the reporting for the 2020 and 2021 Outcome Agreements was reduced significantly due to the pandemic and the pressures on institutions at this time. This means that the 2019 assessment is the most up to date one available. Of the 304,092 enrolments at Scottish Colleges in 2019 to 2020, 245 (0.08%) were by BSL students.</p> <p>In addition to the inclusion of BSL plans in the SFC Outcome Agreements, SFC have also undertaken a high level assessment of the BSL plans themselves. All universities and colleges in Scotland have their BSL plan (accessible in BSL and English) available on their website. All plans meet the key requirements of the National Plan, and institutions have shown a clear commitment to update and develop their plans taking into account progress, feedback and further consultation.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>Actions are generally SMART with key person or department named for taking each action forward giving a clear line of responsibility. Actions range from making events, facilities and services more accessible to BSL users (including employment, childcare, mental health, careers advice, and promoting and raising awareness of contact SCOTLAND-BSL; ensuring accessibility in democratic processes (e.g. student reps, complaints, committees); reviewing how to make extra-curricular and recreational facilities BSL friendly and accessible (this included museum and galleries, exhibitions, prestigious lecture series, Fresher's Week, clubs and societies); engaging with local Councils/schools to engage with BSL pupils; exploring routes for fluent BSL users to become qualified teachers; providing BSL training to key staff or in some cases offered to all staff/students; and holding informal BSL chat sessions for staff and students to practice BSL.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>The lack of BSL interpreters was raised as an issue in the plans, particularly for the North East Scotland. An assessment of the BSL plans did highlight a common theme in relation to a lack of access to BSL interpreters. Excellent work on the landscaping review which sought to inform and assist this issue. It should be noted that the SFC support the flagship MA (Hons) British Sign Language (Interpreting, Translating and Applied Language Studies) at Heriot Watt University.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
26	<p>Establish a steering group to help colleges and universities develop their own BSL plans. This will be run by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), will involve BSL users*, and will include assessing what further guidance colleges and universities need to ensure they are clear about their responsibilities to BSL users* leaving school and going on to further or higher education.</p>	<p>This action was progressed and a SFC BSL Steering Group was in place from January 2018 to October 2019. Membership included the SFC and representatives from colleges, universities, equality agencies including Deaf Action, Scottish Government and a BSL using student representative.</p> <p>The group informed the requirements of BSL reporting in the SFC's Outcome Agreements and considered progress. In addition to this, the group oversaw a BSL Showcase event for the sector which was BSL led.</p> <p>The group was closed in November 2019 following discussions with the Scottish Government. It was felt that the group had achieved its purpose in relation to overseeing the reporting and publishing of BSL plans and the promotion of BSL. Going forward the SFC and the Scottish Government agreed that the SFC's role would be better placed in providing support to the Scottish Government on the next steps for the National Plan.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
27	Offer accessible advice and guidance to students who use BSL on funding packages available through the Student Award Agency Scotland (SAAS)	SAAS Funding Guide suite and help videos are translated with BSL overlay and are embedded throughout the SAAS website – www.saas.gov.uk . Funding Awareness Webinars, with BSL interpreters, have also been undertaken to support prospective BSL students and their families understand student funding entitlement and study options.



7. Post-school education

7.1 Progress in after-school education

The transition from school to higher or further education, or to the world of work, is a demanding time for everyone.

BSL users may face additional challenges and need additional support in moving from one environment – where use of the language may have been relatively well established – to another. Where many colleges and universities have pursued their own plans for BSL, the National Plan committed to providing support and guidance through the Foundation Apprenticeship and Modern Apprenticeship systems, and to working with Jobcentres and others to raise awareness of the needs of BSL users.

Significant progress has been achieved, including:

- Information, advice and guidance in BSL for pupils and students has been delivered by Skills Development Scotland.
- All training providers delivering Foundation Apprenticeships have equalities policies which should cover BSL use.
- BSL users are entitled to the highest level of Modern Apprenticeship funding.
- Scottish Government and service providers are working to extend Fair Start Scotland to people with deafness or partial hearing loss.

7.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
28	<p>Provide a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL for pupils and students to support their career and learning choices and the transition process.</p> <p>This will be delivered by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and will be taken forward as part of our work to implement the 'Career Education Standard 3-18', which is one of the commitments of the 'Developing our Young Workforce' (DYW) strategy.</p>	<p>This advice has been developed and can be found published online here from Skills Development Scotland.</p>
29	<p>Promote Foundation Apprenticeships for school children who use BSL. This will be delivered through Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and will provide the experience employers look for, backed by industry-recognised qualifications, enabling them to do well in their chosen career from the start.</p>	<p>Foundation Apprenticeships are available across all schools and open to all learners. All training providers have equalities policies and any individual submitting an expression of interest is supported through SDSs CIAG services.</p>
30	<p>Give BSL users* the highest level of Modern Apprenticeship funding for their chosen framework.</p>	<p>The highest contribution rate is paid to any new Apprentices declaring a disability.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
31	Work with Jobcentres and others to raise awareness of the needs of BSL users* to ensure that they are given relevant, appropriate and accessible advice about their options.	<p>As part of our continuous improvement activities for Fair Start Scotland in 2021-2022, we are working with Service Providers to extend the reach of the service to eligible groups who are currently under-represented across the service. This includes individuals with D/deaf people.</p> <p>Through the Young Person’s Guarantee, there will be a person-centred approach to promoting fair access to opportunities when providing careers advice and guidance. Practitioners will continue to support young people with additional support needs and provide accessible advice about their options.</p>

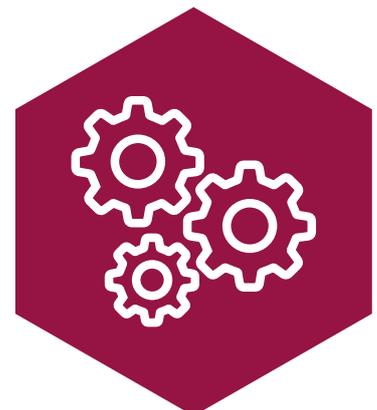


8. Training, work and social security

8.1 Progress in training, work and social security The Scottish Government is committed to making opportunities for training and work available to all, including those who use BSL as their first or preferred language. A number of the 70 actions defined in the 2017-2023 National Plan apply to the workplace, training for work, access and support for work, and social security. Significant progress has been made since the launch of the Plan.

Some key developments:

- Skills Development Scotland is now helping to make Foundation Apprenticeships available to all learners, including BSL users, who are generally eligible for the highest level of modern apprenticeship funding.
- Fair Start Scotland (FSS) provides tailored, one-to-one support for people who face challenges in securing work. Between April 2018 and December 2020, FSS has helped 608 D/deaf individuals.
- The Scottish Government is making information about the Young Person's Guarantee accessible in BSL.
- The FSS Employer Engagement Working Group – which focuses on supporting communities and finding hidden talent – has worked with Deaf Action.
- As part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2021, Skills Development Scotland worked with the BDA on a live streaming event including online workshops with BSL signers. This was viewed by over 1,900 people on Facebook.
- The Workplace Equality Fund, running since 2017, has supported inclusion in the workplace for BSL users.
- Social Security Scotland's services are now accessible to BSL users throughout the benefit process. The service is currently under expansion.
- BSL/English interpreting is offered within the Social Security Experience Panels programme.



8.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
32	<p>Ensure that every Scottish Government funded employment programme and training opportunity is accessible to BSL users* and that tailored and personalised support is available to them. This includes Fair Start Scotland (FSS), our new employment programme which starts in April 2018.</p>	<p>Fair Start Scotland supports those who face the greatest challenges in obtaining work, offering personalised, one to one support, tailored to individual circumstances. Pre-employment support can last up to 18 months depending on the specific needs of the individual, recognising that circumstances can change due to health or personal reasons.</p> <p>The latest statistics published show that between April 2018 and December 2020, 608 D/deaf individuals have been supported by the service so far.</p> <p>We continue to invest in our employability services including more than £20 million this financial year (2020-21) in FSS, ensuring it is appropriately funded to deliver for those who need support taking account of COVID-19 impacts.</p> <p>Through our partnership with Local Authorities our jointly managed No One Left Behind model provides employability support to individuals of all ages, supporting them to increase confidence, skills and experience enabling them to progress towards or enter employment and, if needed, BSL support will be provided.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>As we recover from the economic impact of COVID-19, equality for all, will be at the heart of what we do.</p> <p>Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) aims to deliver intensive employability support for low income parents to access and progress in employment, supporting them to address barriers and upskill and, if needed, BSL support will be provided.</p> <p>A £2.35m Boost for PESF was announced in the PfG for 2020/21. Focusing on three key themes this investment enhances pre-employment support for disabled parents; young parents and for parents accessing funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). On the 1st of March 2021 the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government announced that the Tackling Child Poverty Fund would allocate a further £5m through PESF to provide additional support for disabled parents enabling us to further strengthen the support for this priority group as part of the Scottish Governments efforts to eradicate Child Poverty.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
33	<p>Provide up to 12 months support to BSL users* who access our in-work support services, including those in Fair Start Scotland (FSS). This is in addition to the 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme.</p>	<p>The Government is working to ensure that communications activity relating to the Young Person's Guarantee is accessible which includes providing alternative formats, such as BSL.</p> <p>£30 million has been invested in this financial year through the Guarantee to ensure local partnerships deliver person-centred and place-based support for young people. This funding will further ensure discrete support for young people with additional support needs at a local level, including key worker support.</p> <p>We are further providing additional funding to Our Future Now and Discovering Your Potential. These programmes play a valuable role in supporting young people with additional barriers and ensure they have the opportunity to thrive.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
34	<p>Work with partners who deliver employment services, and with employer groups already supporting employability (for example the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Regional Groups) to promote more diverse recruitment, and provide specific advice on the needs of BSL users* so that they are clear about their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Employers will be encouraged and supported to embed inclusive workplace practices through their involvement in the Young Person’s Guarantee. Employers will commit to “creating an inclusive and fair workplace” and to “helping those who need it most”. This will be linked to the organisation’s own diversity and equality policies and activities, and employers will be supported to consider areas of further action and developments in line with their commitment.</p> <p>Through delivery of Fair Start Scotland we have worked with Deaf Action to present to the FSS Employer Engagement Working Group, which included all FSS service providers, with a focus on supporting local communities and finding hidden talent.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
35	<p>Raise awareness of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme with employers and representative organisations and with BSL users* themselves, so that BSL users* who are employed, (including those who are undertaking a Modern Apprenticeship) can benefit from the support it provides.</p>	<p>Skills Development Scotland works in partnership with the British Deaf Association to raise awareness of apprenticeship opportunities to D/deaf young people in Scotland. We also raise awareness of the needs of Deaf people through our work with training providers and employers, including promoting Access to Work funding and developing a guide for providers on accessing BSL/English interpreting on Apprenticeships. As part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2021 SDS collaborated with British Deaf Association (BDA) on a live streaming event which supports Apprenticeships. This was jointly delivered with the BDA (and advertised by them) with online workshops with BSL signers regarding apprenticeships, including apprentices who are deaf. As at 4th March 2021, there had been 1,900 views of the video on Facebook. On the session of 3rd March there were around 80 people joining live and 1 hour later there were over 1,000 views of the video.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
36	<p>Establish a Workplace Equality Fund in 2017 to address long standing barriers in access to the labour market for people with a range of characteristics, including BSL users*. The aim of the Workplace Equality Fund will be to reduce employment inequalities so that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and improve Scotland's economic performance.</p>	<p>The Workplace Equality Fund which was launched in 2018 was designed to address long standing barriers in the labour market preventing positive outcomes for specific equality groups including minority ethnic people, women, disabled people, older workers (those aged over 50 – including menopause support).</p> <p>Since its launch, the fund has provided over £1.8m worth of funding to 58 projects. 28 of these projects had a primary aim of working with disabled people & people with long term health conditions. These projects totaled over £440,000.</p> <p>The fund has supported projects to help employers develop more inclusive working practices for disabled people including D/deaf BSL users.</p> <p>An evaluation of the efficacy of previous funds in achieving their stated outcomes and aims was undertaken at the beginning of 2021. The report gave key recommendations including increasing the project delivery time and implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation process. These recommendations will be taken forward through the new multi-year version of the Workplace Equality Fund.</p> <p>The new fund will launch in the winter of 2021/22 with up to £800,000 committed to the fund for this year.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
37	Ensure that our new social security system is fully accessible to BSL users* at all stages of the process – including advice, applications, feedback, complaints and appeals.	Currently Social Security Scotland’s services are accessible to BSL users throughout the benefit process. We are currently expanding the service provision and will have an improved range of BSL services by Summer 2021.
38	Over 2,400 volunteers from across Scotland have signed up to the Experience Panels. Panel members will help to design and test the new social security system to ensure it works for them, and help ensure our new system is fully accessible to BSL users*.	The Social Security Experience Panels programme offers BSL provision on our helpline service and can provide BSL/English interpreting as required. This is advertised as standard across all of our research and communication with the panel. Research with BSL users in the Experience Panels, as well as data from other sources, has underpinned the work to make Social Security Scotland’s services accessible to BSL users.

9. Health, mental health and wellbeing

9.1 Progress in health, mental health and wellbeing

Our aspiration is for BSL users to receive the same level of healthcare and support as everyone else in society, and for health professionals using BSL to enjoy fair access to training, employment and career development. The Plan recognises that to achieve this, the use of BSL must be integrated into the health sector, and the language must be available as an option in key areas of interaction.

In 2017 the Plan called for information about health services and social care to be made available in BSL, that BSL/English interpreters should be available in health settings, and that psychological therapies should be available to BSL users on an equal basis, along with other specific actions aimed at integrating the language into the health sector's daily life. While there remains work to do before the end of the Plan period in 2023, a great deal has been achieved so far.

- Public Health Scotland (PHS) has made all screening and immunisation material accessible in BSL on the NHS Inform website.
- In 2018 and 2019, NHS24 and NHS Health Scotland (HS) worked with deaf community members to explore which health topics were important to them. In response, material about mental health, sexual health, long-term conditions, COPD, coeliac disease and chronic pain has been translated and made available in BSL.
- BSL translations of mental health and wellbeing content have been commissioned.
- QR codes on posters and letters have been used to take users directly to BSL pages on relevant websites.
- COVID-19 information has been made available in BSL when published in English.
- Communications toolkits have been developed to help staff promote BSL information, including information about coronavirus and vaccination.
- NHS HS has developed an e-learning resource to raise awareness of BSL and Deaf culture for health and social care staff.
- More than 2,400 people across Scotland have accessed a BSL and Tactile Awareness e-module since its launch in 2018.
- Progress has been made in making individual health records show when the patient's preferred language is BSL, or when a BSL interpreter is needed. By September 2019, four boards had implemented the change and seven more were working on the project.

- ◆ The contactSCOTLAND-BSL platform provides a video relay service enabling BSL signers to make telephone contact with service providers, including GPs and other health professionals.
- ◆ A new national policy has been developed to provide guidance on NHS Scotland's responsibilities in providing interpretation and translation services.
- ◆ Guidance in working with BSL users has been developed for primary care practitioners.
- ◆ SportsScotland, the national agency for sport, have made good progress scoping out a project plan, to support its delivery against the action for sport in the British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan. This included plans to develop guidance for Scottish governing bodies of sport (SGBs) to improve their engagement with BSL users in their respective sports.



9.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
39	<p>Publish a schedule for making all screening and immunisation information accessible in BSL. NHS Scotland will produce information in BSL to support Bowel, Breast and Cervical screening programmes. NHS Scotland will produce information in BSL to support Childhood and Seasonal Flu immunisation programmes. This information will be easy to find on the 'NHS Inform' website.</p>	<p>Public Health Scotland has developed a schedule for all screening and immunisation materials. All screening and immunisation materials are now accessible in BSL, and will continue to be translated when materials are due for review.</p> <p>Translations in BSL available on the NHS inform website</p> <p>Through consultation with staff supporting BSL users, QR codes are now placed on flu posters, as well as screening and immunisation appointment letters. The QR codes take the user straight to the relevant webpage on NHS inform for information in BSL.</p> <p>COVID-19 general and immunisation information was also made available in BSL very quickly on the NHS inform website.</p> <p>NHS 24 have made it simple to access BSL information on NHS inform by typing 'BSL' in NHS inform search bar. This takes users to all the BSL translations available on the site. These can also be accessed using the short URL www.nhsinform.scot/bsl</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>The translation/format has been added to web page titles on NHS inform, so, for example, if someone searches for 'Cough' the search results will include a link to the web page with the BSL version of cough, and the name of the web page shows as 'Cough (BSL)' BSL translations can also be found on YouTube www.youtube.com/user/nhsinform</p> <p>The BSL resources on NHS inform were promoted during Deaf Awareness Week and Mental Health Awareness Week, and various national events in 2019, including deafscotland's conferences: Scottish Sensory and Equality Conference and Awards (15 March 2019); BSL summit (23 September 2019) and Connect Us Too (10 October 2019). NHS 24 have also presented at various events targeting professionals who engage with BSL users, to help keep staff updated with the progress of this work, and at Deaf Action's Golden Amber club.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>In February 2020, a Communications Toolkit was developed by NHS 24 to help staff from different sectors to promote the BSL information on NHS inform. This has been paused due to the pandemic and will be picked up by Summer 2021.</p> <p>To help BSL users access NHS inform we have produced two video clips both available here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ‘What is NHS inform’ ‘What is NHS inform’ is about the website, and how to navigate to the different sections ◆ ‘Make the most of webchat’ ‘Make the most of webchat’ explains what webchat is and how to use it. <p>The contact SCOTLAND-BSL logo is displayed on the ‘We’ll Keep You Right’ pull up banners. ‘We’ll keep you right’ is a National campaign that highlights the range of services available to help people access the right care at the right time, and where to go if you are not sure which service to access.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>Since the start of the pandemic outbreak, NHS inform has been hosting extensive information about coronavirus in BSL. A toolkit explaining how people with communication differences (including BSL users) can access this information in their preferred format was disseminated to over 700 contacts. Further work is anticipated until 2023.</p> <p>We would like to work with our partners at British Deaf Association (BDA), deafscotland, Deaf Action and other organisations that support BSL users to help with this. We had an opportunity to be involved in a zoom meeting in February 2021 (organised by BDA) with deaf users to answer questions about COVID-19. As a follow up BDA will be organising more zoom meetings and inviting NHS 24 and PHS to talk about wider health issues, which gives us a prime opportunity to promote the BSL translations on NHS inform website. We will also seek other opportunities like this from other partners.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
40	<p>Increase the availability of accurate and relevant health and social care information in BSL and will work with BSL users* to determine where this information should be located. NHS Health Scotland and NHS 24 will deliver this work in partnership and will review progress in 2019 and every two years thereafter.</p>	<p>In 2018, NHS 24 and NHS HS (before PHS) engaged with over 200 deaf community members across the country to explore which health topics were important to them. These health topics were made available in BSL on NHS inform. NHS 24 presented at various events in 2018/19 targeting professionals who engage with BSL users, to help keep staff updated with the progress of this work.</p> <p>In 2019 NHS 24 and NHS HS further engaged with BSL users at deafscotland's national events to explore health information needs.</p> <p>As a result of this, NHS inform content about mental health, long term conditions (Diabetes, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), COPD, Coeliac disease, chronic pain), and sexual health was translated, alongside the content that regularly attracts the highest number of hits (stomach ache, sore throat, cough and flu).</p> <p>Further BSL translations of mental health and wellbeing content is being commissioned. These clips are to be translated and available from May 2021.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
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A number of healthy living topics were also felt important to the deaf community, such as healthy eating, exercise, and self-management of health and wellbeing. Discussions are to be had between PHS and NHS 24 about which appropriate content can be translated into BSL, which will be available on NHS inform website.

NHS 24 Digital Team have agreed a process for linking to quality-assured BSL clips from the NHS inform You Tube channel (effectively creating a BSL hub on You Tube). Researching such resources and engaging with the organisations that developed them has not be possible due to other work priorities. Linking to other trusted organisations and maintaining updates of BSL translations are to be further explored.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
41	<p>Work with local authorities, providers and service users to improve the way that adult social care is delivered, including how residential care is commissioned and how care and support is delivered to people at home. The voices and experiences of service users, including BSL users* will be at the centre of these reforms and will shape planning and implementation and improve outcomes.</p>	<p>Before the pandemic began, PHS had been working with a wide range of partners including people who use social care support, COSLA, unpaid carers, the social care sector and others to develop a reform programme for adult social care.</p> <p>This work identified a number of priorities where we needed to work together to support change and improvement including how social care is understood and valued by individuals and society, how it is funded and paid for into the future, what models of care we need in Scotland and how they are delivered, and how we achieve Fair Work for our vital social care workforce.</p> <p>While much of that work was paused due to the pandemic and the independent review of adult social care we remain committed to co-production and ensuring that those who use, or who may need, adult social care are at the heart of developing new approaches for the future.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
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In the past year we have worked co-productively with Social Work Scotland, COSLA, partners, stakeholders and service users on the development of a Self-Directed Support Framework of standards that incorporates the principles of a human rights approach and consideration of consistent implementation nationwide. The Framework sets out the actions that public and voluntary organisations would take to support authorities to build on their progress towards more flexible and responsive social care support, co-produced with communities and supported people and to ensure that personal outcomes are agreed on the basis of what matters to the person.

The Framework and standards also incorporate the need for independent support and advice, all of which has been recognised within the Independent Review of Adult Social Care (IRASC).

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
42	Take forward the work to extend free personal care to everyone who requires it, regardless of age, taking account of the views and needs of BSL users*.	The Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland recommended the removal of non-residential charges for adult social care. Work to examine how this could be achieved began in April 2021 and with the aim of providing options for the Scottish Government.



Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
43	<p>Develop a learning resource for health and social care staff to raise awareness of BSL and Deaf culture. This will be led by NHS Health Scotland and will be rolled out across Scotland by 2018.</p>	<p>NHS Health Scotland completed this action and developed an e-learning resource for health and social care staff to raise awareness of BSL and Deaf culture. This was done in partnership with BSL users, colleagues from: deafscotland, Deafblind Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Scottish Social Services Council, NHS Education Scotland, NHS Lothian and NHS Forth Valley.</p> <p>The e-module ‘British Sign Language (BSL) and Tactile BSL awareness’ was launched in September 2018, and has had over 1,400 people complete the course, with over 2,400 accessing the course in Scotland. This e-module can be accessed here.</p> <p>NHS Health Scotland also collaborated with NES and Talking Mats to update the ‘Making Communication Even Better’ learning resource, reflecting the needs of BSL users, which was launched in September 2020.</p> <p>The module has been promoted via the partners involved in the development and continues to be cascaded through NHS Scotland boards. The module is also hosted on 8 NHS Board websites, 2 Local Authority websites, and 2 Higher Education websites.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
44	<p>We will agree how to improve individual patient health records so that they clearly show when the first or preferred language is BSL and a BSL/English interpreter is needed. NHS services can then be notified in advance of any appointments.</p>	<p>Following a pilot by NHS Lothian and Edinburgh University (ANDI project), a letter was issued by the Scottish Government's eHealth lead, to all NHS Boards for implementation in Jan 2019, with agreed support from National Services Scotland (NSS). Progress was mixed in implementing the changes in 2019, the main part of which is to implement a referral flag in SCI Gateway and linkages to GP systems. PHS proposed an audit of the patient information system across early adopters to assess impact on service provision, and potentially on people who did not attend an appointment.</p> <p>By September 2019, PHS gathered information on this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 4 boards had fully implemented the change ◆ 3 boards were in progress and expect to be fully implemented by end of September 2019 ◆ 4 boards were working on the project but had no end date identified – mainly due to it not being an identified issue for them currently and therefore not being prioritised over other priority projects ◆ 7 boards reported it was not applicable to them (national boards)

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 boards were still in the process of responding with an update. <p>This work was paused due to work priorities and COVID-19, and PHS will explore with NSS and wider partners any progression made in the light of COVID-19. PHS is also keen to continue conversations with SG on any development and future of this work.</p>
45	<p>Ensure that – in line with Scotland’s Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 – BSL users* should get the right help at the right time, expect recovery, and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma.</p> <p>By 2020:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NHS Boards and Integration Authorities should take action so that psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users*. NHS 24 and NHS Health Scotland will develop information about mental health accessible for BSL users* through ‘NHS Inform’. NHS 24 will explore how telemedicine initiatives like ‘Breathing Space’ can provide counselling in BSL as an easy-to-access mental health support. 	<p>BSL users can utilise the contactSCOTLAND-BSL is a platform to make initial contact for mental health services, and once in the system, the clinician/administrator would set up a BSL interpreter for appointments.</p> <p>Telephone interpreting and the Near Me (the commonly used video consultation platform) are both available through the internal NHSAn intranet request mechanism. There is also an “interpreting on wheels” service that can be called into hospital sites and the Out of Hours (OOH) centre.</p> <p>This work was paused due to work priorities and COVID-19, and PHS will explore with NSS and wider partners any progress made in the light of COVID-19. PHS is also keen to continue conversations with SG on any development and future of this work.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
46	Implement a new national Interpretation and Translation Policy which includes BSL provision. This will be led by NHS Health Scotland and will provide guidance to support delivery across all NHS boards by 2018.	<p>A NHS Scotland Interpreting, Communication Support and Translation National Policy was developed to provide guidance on NHS Scotland responsibilities to patients and carers who require support from interpreting or translation services. The Policy was developed in collaboration with 10 NHS Boards in Scotland. A competency framework was also developed by PHS to support implementation of the above policy. Furthermore, PHS developed guidance for working with BSL users in primary care to improve access and support effective communication. The three resources above were promoted to health professionals in the NHS, Scottish Government, National Partners and Networks, and third sector organisations via emails and social media. Examples include, HSC ALLIANCE, CHEX, Inclusion Scotland, BDA, COSLA, deafscotland, DeafBlind Scotland, Royal College of GPs, NHS Equality and Diversity Leads.</p> <p>PHS attended a ‘National Deaf Children’s Society’ webinar to present and promote the three national resources (October 2020).</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
47	Work with partners to deliver and evaluate two training programmes aimed at supporting BSL/English interpreters to work within the Health sector, with a view to informing a longer-term approach.	Applications were opened in June 2018 for the UK's first fully online Master's Degree designed to upskill British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreters. The newly validated MSc in BSL/English Interpreting at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh is the only post registration master's in the UK to focus on BSL interpreting, and the only academic course delivered online for registered sign language interpreters.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
48	Work with sport governing bodies and with 'sportscotland' to improve access to information and sporting opportunities for BSL users*.	<p>The Scottish Government has been investing in a consortium of organisations to support public bodies to implement the actions in the National Plan. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, sportscotland, the national agency for sport, made good progress scoping out a project plan, to support its delivery against the action for sport in the British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan. This included plans to develop guidance for Scottish governing bodies of sport (SGBs) to improve their engagement with BSL users in their respective sports.</p> <p>In October 2019, sportscotland delivered a BSL consultation session at the annual SGB Equalities Conference. The consultation was delivered through three workshops, focused on raising awareness, developing understanding and identifying what support SGBs need to improve access to information and opportunities for BSL users. 36 SGBs attended this conference and all attended the BSL workshops. Feedback was gathered and key actions identified.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated challenges and constraints faced by the sporting sector, progress against this action was put on hold. When the time is right, further engagement with SGBs will take place to further develop sporting opportunities for BSL users.</p>
<p>49</p>	<p>Ensure that the national strategy to address social isolation and loneliness which will be published for consultation in Autumn 2017 will make explicit reference to the experience and needs of BSL users*.</p>	<p>Scottish Government published ‘A Connected Scotland’ in December 2018 which stated that; “Through the BSL (British Sign Language) National Plan 2017-2023, we are committed to ensuring that D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users can be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens”. The delivery plan for the strategy has not been published as a result of work pivoting towards the pandemic response, however our intersectional approach to tackling inequalities that lead to social isolation and loneliness remains.</p>

10. Transport

10.1 Progress in transport

In 2016 the Scottish Government published **Going Further**, a plan outlining how we intend to develop and deliver a transport framework that works for everyone who lives in or visits Scotland. Part of this is a commitment to make transport more accessible to all, including BSL users, and this aspiration was picked up and incorporated into the BSL National Plan in 2017.

Since then, progress has been made in making information on transport available in BSL, and in training transport providers to communicate with users. Unsurprisingly the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted transport more than most sectors, has held back some work, but foundations for future progress have been laid. Some key achievements so far include:

- A series of webinars on the annual delivery plan for 2021/22, including BSL interpreters.
- Cycling by Design – the Scottish Government’s initiative on cycling infrastructure – has engaged with the deaf community.
- In 2020, Scotrail launched a BSL app which helps staff communicate with BSL users.
- The Mobility and Accessibility Committee Scotland (MACS) has published guidance on assisting disabled passengers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Department for Transport has launched their REAL disability equality training programme for transport providers. The toolkit has been shared with all operators in Scotland.

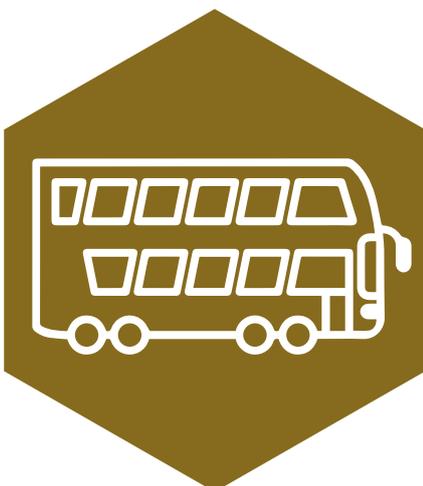


10.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
50	Ensure that transport users, including BSL users*, can participate in the on-going feedback process of the 'Going Further: Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework'.	<p>In Transport Scotland we have been engaging with stakeholders – including D/deaf individuals via Skype, Zoom and MS Teams to help inform priorities for the annual delivery plan for 2021/2022. It has been crucial this year to take time to pause and consider what steps can be taken to improve accessibility and ensure we have priorities that have been agreed by disabled people. We have held a series of webinars, which have included BSL interpreters to specifically ensure the events were accessible to BSL users and enable their views to be heard. We have also worked with Disability Equality Scotland to run weekly polls on issues that matter to a wide range of disabled people. We have also engaged with the deaf community to input to Cycling by Design.</p> <p>Our Accessible Travel Steering Group includes representation from BSL users and the Mobility and Access Committee (MACS) whom we sponsor has members with hearing and sight impairments.</p> <p>We will continue to address the low availability of sign language interpreters or people with some knowledge of signing.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
51	Research technological solutions for providing accessible information in transport hubs (for example train stations, airports etc.)	<p>In 2020 Scotrail launched a BSL app which will help Scotrail's frontline staff communicate with BSL users during their journey. Transport Scotland have commissioned the civil engineers Jacobs to undertake research into the different technologies that are or could become available – and others with hearing impairments. This will be shared once available.</p>
52	Create guidance for passengers who use BSL on how to contact transport providers when things go wrong on a journey.	<p>During the last 12 months different pieces of guidance has been produced to provide additional help to disabled travelers during the pandemic. MACS have produced two specific pieces of COVID-19 guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Guidance for transport operators on assisting disabled passengers. ◆ Guidance for Local Authorities to ensure the mobility needs of disabled people are fully considered in temporary street infrastructure. <p>We continue to engage routinely with our key stakeholders and ensure that our communications – whether online or printed – are inclusive and accessible.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
53	Develop training for transport providers which includes strategies for communicating with BSL users*.	<p>The Department for Transport (DfT) have launched their REAL disability equality training programme to help improve the sector's confidence and skills in delivering inclusive journeys for disabled passengers. The package has been developed with extensive consultation with disabled people and DPOs and is underpinned by two important values: respect and empathy, and promotes two important actions: ask and listen.</p> <p>It will be hosted on the Inclusive Transport Leaders Scheme website. Transport Scotland shared the toolkit with all operators across all modes. We will also continue to promote this moving forward.</p>



11. Culture and the Arts

11.1 Progress in Culture and the Arts

Participation and enjoyment of culture and the arts is integral to the Scottish Government's ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users. The National Plan recognises that D/deaf people play an important part in the artistic community, and that the audience for the arts includes BSL users who are entitled to support and consideration.



The Plan aims to support BSL users in pursuing careers in the arts, to make performances and exhibitions more accessible for BSL users, and to increase the availability of information about the arts in BSL.

Achievements since 2017 include

- ◆ A public consultation, A Culture Strategy for Scotland, prepared with input from BSL sessions run by the BDA. The resulting report is the first of its kind available in BSL.
- ◆ Visit Scotland and Galleries Scotland have hosted sessions for staff to learn about BSL, and about how to support BSL users.
- ◆ BSL interpreters have been working in Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) performances, including live and digital events for children. Since 2020, all RSNO digital work has been subtitled as standard.
- ◆ Creative Scotland has supported the Federation of Scottish Theatres in providing BSL/English interpreting for performances, films and events.
- ◆ Scottish Opera has recently engaged a BSL artist on a one-year contract.
- ◆ The National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) is integrating BSL into all its productions, delivering more than 40 BSL interpreted performances per year between 2018 and 2020. NTS produces signed trailers and introductions for all its work.
- ◆ NTS has worked with a number of BSL-using theatre practitioners, including actors, a playwright and an assistant director.
- ◆ Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is running a four-year doctoral partnership with Heriot Watt University, exploring the relationship between the deaf community and the heritage environment.
- ◆ HES has developed BSL tours for sites including Edinburgh Castle, Stirling Castle, Linlithgow Palace and the Engine Shed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online virtual tours of HES properties have been produced, including BSL versions.
- ◆ In 2020 HES supported a recruitment video with BSL, and worked with Inclusion Scotland to offer an internship to a BSL user.

- ◆ The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is delivering a BA Performance degree in BSL with English, with funding from the SFC and in partnership with Solar Bear, the organisation behind Deaf Youth Theatre, Britain's only permanent youth theatre for BSL users.
- ◆ Creative Scotland's website has sections in BSL, while most of their public events have BSL interpreters.
- ◆ Glasgow Film Theatre's Visible Cinema, funded by Creative Scotland, is working to improve the cinema experience for deaf people.
- ◆ Visit Scotland's website is under development and will promote the Scottish Government's online BSL video relay service, 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL'.



11.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
54	Enable BSL users* to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.	RSNO's digital learning work have all included BSL interpreters; for example, these have included five Nursery Sounds digital shorts, Tara the Tugboat a full length concert for nursery children, Children's Classic Concert's the Night Before Xmas which was also audio described and Gaspard the Fox their forthcoming digital schools concerts. Furthermore, since February 2020, all RSNO digital work has been subtitled as standard.



Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p data-bbox="834 443 1409 1332">Creative Scotland supports the Federation of Scottish Theatres (FST) to produce Access Scottish Theatre listings showing arts events, films and performances with BSL/English interpreting available throughout Scotland. Regularly Funded Organisations are required to deliver their Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Plans as part of their contractual relationship with Creative Scotland. As a result, BSL integration and interpretation has increased in the performing arts sector. Creative Scotland's Open Fund has supported a range of BSL integrated projects. The Fund's guidance outlines expectations regarding accessibility.</p> <p data-bbox="834 1350 1422 1942">Scottish Opera provide subtitles for the majority of opera performances (subject to touring practicalities) and subtitles for all films. They invite everyone working with the Company to advise any health concern or disability and would expect to offer support to anyone that may use BSL in the course of their role. Scottish Opera undertakes regular reviews to assess if/where it might need to consider offering BSL and would expect this to continue.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>National Theatre of Scotland is fully committed to ensuring that all individuals have access to its programme of work. The organisation is engaged in several initiatives and partners to ensure it is working strategically to achieve better representation across audiences, participants, or artists.</p> <p>1) Audience members: National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) aims to offer integrated BSL/English interpreting for all its productions. Integrated BSL enables BSL users to have a much better experience as the BSL interpreter is part of the action on stage rather than isolated to one side of the stage.</p> <p>In 2018/19 and 2019/20, NTS delivered 46 BSL interpreted and integrated performances each year.</p> <p>The Company has also extended its commitment of accessibility to its digital activity in 2020/2021 (see 55 below). The organisation is continuing to trial the use of SUBPACs in some of its shows, a transformative wearable audio technology that converts sound into high fidelity vibrations for d/Deaf and hard of hearing audiences. 244 people accessed SUBPACs during the Futureproof Festival in 2018.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
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Consequently, the proportion of BSL users within the NTS audience (based on questionnaire responses) has seen a continual growth.

2) Participants: National Theatre of Scotland also aims to open all its activities to BSL users. Recent examples include:

- The autumn 2020 edition of the Coming Back Out Social Dance Clubs, in partnership with Scottish Queer International Film Festival (42 participants)
- Lament for Sheku Bayoh post show discussion and ‘safe space’ (104 participants), November 2020.



Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>3) Professionals: The National Theatre of Scotland was an active partner in the initiative: Creative Licht (other partners included SignArts, BOP (Birds of Paradise, leading disabled led theatre company) and Solar Bear (theatre company working with deaf and hearing artists and young people) and funded by Creative Scotland. The project brought together BSL/English Interpreters working in Scotland with those working in the creative industries with the ambition of up-skilling all those who took part to develop and improve approaches to interpreted performances. The project is ongoing.</p> <p>In the past few years, we have employed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 1 BSL using playwright. ◆ 1 BSL using assistant director. ◆ 8 BSL using actors for artistic projects. ◆ 5 BSL using actors to create BSL introductions. ◆ 3 BSL using actors to translate between English and BSL for digital artistic projects. ◆ 4 BSL using actors in development of artistic projects. ◆ 3 BSL using artists be to BSL consultants on artistic projects.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
55	Support professional pathways to enable BSL users* to consider a career in culture and the arts.	Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have a four-year doctoral partnership with Heriot Watt University exploring the relationship between the deaf community and the heritage environment, which has offered opportunities in academic year (2021-22) for placements with students from the BSL studies course to work with HES. HES produced a video as part of its Board recruitment exercise in 2020 and supported this with BSL. HES have worked with Inclusion Scotland to support an internship for a BSL user in 2020.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>Two rounds of the Create: Inclusion Fund have been delivered and the third round is currently in planning. This fund is to specifically increase the diversity of people in the arts, screen and creative industries, supporting development and progress of creative practice and professional development. Solar Bear, a Regularly Funded Organisation, is supported to deliver a partnership with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland for its BA Performance in British Sign Language and English (also funded by the Scottish Funding Council). BA students use BSL and/or spoken English. It is their choice. The course explores how to create performance through both languages. Solar Bear runs Deaf Youth Theatre (DYT), Britain's only year-round, permanent youth theatre for BSL users, as well as the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. With a reputation for ground-breaking work in creating theatre productions that are accessible to deaf and hearing audience, DYT is producing a new generation of professional deaf actors. Creative Scotland also funded a two-year training initiative called Creative Licht to provide a training programme for SLIs to develop performance skills and work in partnership with performing arts sector. Creative Licht was a partnership between Sign Arts, National Theatre of Scotland, Solar Bear and Creative Scotland.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
56	Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on websites and at venues.	<p>A summary of A Culture Strategy for Scotland is available in BSL: Creative Scotland includes subtitling on all publically available films. Their website also has a welcome in BSL and all funding guidance is BSL interpreted. Across their programmes they expect funding applicants to include Access Costs in their budgets. All Creative Scotland’s public events are also BSL interpreted as default in planning. Visible Cinema at the Glasgow Film Theatre is run in partnership with Film Hub Scotland and funded by Creative Scotland. The ambition of Visible Cinema is to increase awareness of cinema access and to provide a relaxed and welcoming environment in which those who are D/deaf or hard of hearing can enjoy a range of films.</p> <p>National Theatre of Scotland creates BSL trailers or introductions for all its artistic work, and it aims to give as much information about the BSL/English interpreting of a performance on its website, such as name of interpreter, level of integration etc.</p> <p>8 video trailers were created in 2018/2019 ,12 in 2019/2020 and 7 in 2020/21. They had combined views of almost 38,000.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>All videos published on the Company's website and/or on social media are captioned.</p> <p>The organisation is also undertaking research to determine what the best access solution for short films is: either a BSL introduction and a captioned short film, or a BSL interpreted short film. This is important as short films are often viewed on phones which might make the BSL interpreted version too small to be accessed comfortably. The research will include focus groups with BSL users and a D/deaf artist. NTS is planning to publish the results of this research for the benefit of the sector.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
57	Improve access to the historical environment, and cultural events, and performing arts and film for BSL users*.	<p>In 2020 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) published its BSL Plan 2020-24 setting out its ambitions in relation to communication and engagement with BSL users. Over the past 3 years HES has developed BSL Tours at ITS sites including Edinburgh Castle, Stirling Castle, Linlithgow Palace and The Engine Shed. Its large events (e.g. Castle of Light 2019) included as part of its programme set days and times for BSL Tours. For its annual Community Heritage Conference in 2019, HES was supported by electronic note-takers and BSL interpreters.</p> <p>HES have a four-year doctoral partnership with Heriot Watt University in place which will explore the relationship between the deaf community and the heritage environment. This has also offered opportunities in academic year (2021-22) for placements with students from the BSL studies course to work with HES.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>HES produced a video as part of its Board recruitment exercise in 2020 and supported this with BSL and all HES videos produced provide subtitles.</p> <p>As part of initiatives to promote 'hidden histories' HES have produced blogs highlighting individuals from the past with lived experienced of deafness.</p> <p>HES's learning and inclusion team worked remotely with 12 young people through its Heritage Remixed programme to coordinate the scripting and recording of 12 short historic fiction films including a BSL perspective.</p> <p>COVID-19 has resulted in HES sites being closed and subsequently has curtailed its events activity over 2020. In response to this HES have worked with Inclusion Scotland to support an internship for a BSL user. Development work has also taken place to produce online BSL tour versions. HES's Community Heritage Conference has converted to digital monthly sessions over 2021 where BSL/English interpreting is available to support BSL users' participation.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>As the rest of the sector, National Theatre of Scotland turned to digital in reaction to the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020. The Company was determined to make its digital work as accessible as its touring work.</p> <p>In spring/summer 2020, as part of the Company's crisis responsive Scenes for Survival project, National Theatre of Scotland commissioned a special extract from Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting, performed in BSL by actor Brian Duffy, as well as Squeezy Yoghurt, written by D/deaf artist Bea Webster and performed in BSL by D/deaf actor Brooklyn Melvin, and Robert Softley Gale's Ian and Sheena featuring BSL performance interpretation from Natalie MacDonald.</p> <p>44 video introductions were created to enable BSL users to have a better experience when accessing short films with captions.</p> <p>Our streamed artistic works Lament for Sheku Bayoh and Rapunzel were both released with BSL interpreted versions included.</p> <p>The Company is soon to launch a new augmented reality app, Ghosts, written and directed by Adura Onashile exploring slavery and empire in Glasgow's Merchant City. A BSL video version will be made available to D/deaf audiences, which is being created by two D/deaf BSL using actors.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
58	<p>Seek the views of BSL users* to ensure that the Scottish Government's new culture strategy organisations for Scotland recognises the value of BSL and Deaf culture, and the contribution it makes to the health, wealth and success of people and our communities.</p>	<p>The public consultation on A Culture Strategy for Scotland was the first Scottish Government consultation to be made available in BSL format. The Scottish Government also supported specific BSL consultation sessions, facilitated by the British Deaf Association in Scotland, to ensure that the voices of BSL users and Deaf culture was fully represented in the vision, ambitions, aims and guiding principles set out in the A Culture Strategy for Scotland. Diversity and inclusion remains a cross-cutting priority of the National Partnership for Culture, which was established to support delivery of the culture strategy, and is embedded within its agreed work programme for 2021. A Culture Strategy for Scotland (vimeo.com)</p>
59	<p>Train staff in the major tourist information centres about the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service (VRS) called 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL' and how to help our D/deaf and Deafblind BSL visitors access the service. This work will be delivered by VisitScotland.</p>	<p>VisitScotland's equality specialist arranged and hosted a session for colleagues at the Edinburgh information centre about the service. Further sessions will be arranged as allowed.</p> <p>Galleries Scotland provided Deaf Awareness Training and an Introduction to British Sign Language Training to all interested staff in March 2021.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
60	Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service (VRS) called 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL' on the VisitScotland website.	VisitScotland's (visitscotland.com) site is being redeveloped and this will be added shortly.



12. Justice

12.1 Progress in Justice

The Scottish Government recognises that BSL users must have the same access and support within the legal and justice system as other citizens, and the National Plan includes a number of key actions aimed at achieving this goal.

It's important that the experience, views and aspirations of D/deaf people and BSL users are taken into consideration, and applied to future policy. Perhaps the most important development in this area has been the establishment of a BSL-led justice advisory group, which will inform and influence decisions and actions on the use of the language within the legal system.

Some major achievements since the launch of the National Plan in 2017 include:

- The setting up of the BSL Justice Advisory Group (BSLJAG), which brings together twelve different organisations. This Group will provide guidance and deliver feedback from the BSL community to justice and legal agencies as we build on existing services and introduce new measures.
- The BSLJAG met for the first time in February 2020, and while the COVID-19 pandemic has hindered further work, plans are in place to develop a new statutory framework for a forward-looking, user-centred legal aid service.
- Work has begun on evaluating training programmes for BSL/English interpreters to work within the justice sector.
- Work has begun to improve access to emergency services for BSL users. Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue and Scottish Ambulance Service have together set up a short life working group (SLWG) to focus on this.
- The emergency services are working with Government to improve access for people who cannot use standard telephone services, including BSL users.
- Work has been carried out to improve access to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for BSL users. This has included working with Deaf Action and other groups to prepare a series of BSL safety videos for deaf students.



12.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
61	Establish a BSL-led justice advisory group to provide expertise and guidance to justice agencies. The group will play a key role in developing and delivering a programme of improvements to help the justice agencies better meet the needs of BSL users*.	<p>Scottish Government’s Civil Law and Legal System division established the BSL Justice Advisory Group (BSLJAG), consisting of twelve organisations and agencies at commencement. The BSLJAG will use an evidence based approach to provide expertise and guidance to justice and legal agencies including the Scottish Government and develop and deliver a programme of improvements to help these agencies and the Scottish Government better meet the needs of BSL users. The BSLJAG aims to meet quarterly to discuss and monitor implementation of solutions for BSL users to issues within the justice system and wider legal systems in Scotland.</p> <p>At the first meeting of the BSLJAG in February 2020, research was presented by Heriot Watt University alongside observations from the involved agencies which showed there were shortcomings in areas of the justice system in Scotland. The BSLJAG is exploring various routes to source a more substantial evidence base in order to focus its guidance and improvements on a wider variety of areas. Once a sufficiently large evidence base is gathered, the BSLJAG will develop a programme of improvements.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>Due to COVID-19 the BSLJAG has not been able to reconvene since the first meeting, although it is a priority to arrange a second meeting when resources allow.</p> <p>Following a period of public consultation (in summer 2019) there is support for developing a new statutory framework for a modern, forward-looking and user-centred legal aid service for Scotland. Analysis shows the majority of respondents support that the user should be at the centre of the legal aid system, and agreed that the current model of provision could be strengthened. There was also support for more targeted provision which could improve access to legally aided services in certain geographical areas or for groups with specific legal needs, such as domestic violence, disability or persons from a BME background. These are issues that the Bill Team would be interested on engaging with the advisory group on, during the Bill to reform the legal aid system. It appears that no representative groups submitted responses to the consultation.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
62	Work with partners to deliver and evaluate two training programmes aimed at supporting BSL/English interpreters to work within the Justice sector, with a view to informing a longer-term approach.	Queen Margaret University update: Elective modules on the MSc BSL/English Interpreting programme are targeted at specialist areas of practice, including four that were supported by funding from the Scottish Government, Interpreting in: Healthcare Settings, Mental Healthcare Settings, Justice Settings and Educational Settings. Each of these modules has, to date, been delivered once. Feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive. The initial uptake from interpreters in Scotland was not as enthusiastic as expected, although proportionately the number of students from Scotland is higher than for the rest of the UK. To address this, all modules have now been opened to 'Associate Students' who may wish to study on a single module rather than working towards a postgraduate award. We anticipate that this will attract greater number of students from Scotland and across the UK. Our first Associate Student, from Scotland, joined for the Interpreting in Arts and Culture Settings module in September 2020.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>In February 2018 we ran a MOOC (massive open online course) on changes to the Criminal (Justice Scotland) Act 2016. The course material was generated in collaboration with Police Scotland. This course was free to interpreters of both spoken and signed languages to attend, and over 50 interpreters from Scotland participated, from a total of 230 worldwide.</p>
<p>63</p>	<p>Work with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service to develop and implement measures to improve access to emergency services for BSL users*.</p>	<p>Scotland's Emergency Services: Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue and Scottish Ambulance Service are committed to working collaboratively to improve and promote accessibility for people contacting any of our emergency services. We are specifically looking at improving our services for Deaf/deaf, hard of hearing communities and people who have difficulty communicating using speech.</p> <p>In the summer of 2019, the Scottish Emergency Services along with NHS 24 set up a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) to focus on this. Since then, the SLWG have worked in partnership to review current contact methods and explore innovative new channels, such as the use of app based technology.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
		<p>This has involved members of the SLWG travelling the length of the United Kingdom to identify potential improvements to service provision. This included a visit to the UK's 999 service provider BT in Liverpool, to gain a better understanding of Relay UK – a text based contact method. Additionally, members of the SLWG also travelled to Manchester sharing information and best practice with service leads for England and Wales.</p> <p>The SLWG is currently working alongside the Scottish Government and Home Office to ensure that future service provision meets the needs of individuals and communities who need accessible contact methods other than standard speech based telephone services. In addition to this, wider consultation work is ongoing at a national level via Ofcom, the UK's communications regulation and locally through Equality & Diversity (E&D) practitioners.</p>

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The E&D practitioners have been considering common issues that the Services face in meeting the needs of individuals with a disability in the provision of our public services. The objective of this Accessible Communications Group (ACG) was to identify areas of common concern where there was sufficient overlap between the services in how a service was delivered to allow a collaborative approach to solving identified challenges.

The ACG have identified possible areas for joint working and prioritised these on an evaluation of the severity of the concern, the potential positive impact on service delivery and significance of the benefit to the recipient of the service.

As discussed above, this has included access to the emergency service and calling 999.

The ACG are also looking at the possibility of producing our own 'symbols sheet' that could be utilised at operational incidents to aid communication. The sharing of this piece of work will ensure that there is consistency around the symbols used, which will hopefully aid understanding in an emergency situation.

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
64	Improve access to all Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), emergency and preventative strategies (including home fire safety visits), for BSL users*.	<p>Due to Covid-19 these important areas of work have been delayed and partners are looking forward to being able to continue with these during 2021/2022. Equality practitioners from SFRS, Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service have continued to meet regularly throughout 2020/21 to discuss a range of equality issues including accessibility for BSL users.</p> <p>Furthermore, SFRS and Police Scotland joined Scottish Government's BSL Justice Advisory Group</p> <p>Student Fire Safety: The SFRS have been working closely with third sector community groups such as Deaf Action and have prepared a range of BSL safety videos and other materials on our website. We collaborated to produce a safety guide for students who are deaf and are moving into independent rented accommodation.</p>

13. Democracy

13.1 Progress in Democracy

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that everyone in Scotland who wants to take part in politics is able to do so, to whichever level they wish. BSL users must have the same level of access as everyone else in the electoral process, our institutions, and our political parties.



The National Plan defined a number of actions around politics and democracy, including evaluating the needs of BSL signers, improving access to information, and providing support.

The Scottish Parliament election of 2021 was a key point within the timeframe of the BSL National Plan, and an opportunity to assess progress made in the field of democracy and politics.

- The Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland) (AEOFS) is administered by Inclusion Scotland, with funding from the Scottish Government. It works to remove barriers in pursuit of elected office, including meeting the needs of BSL users.
- A series of BSL videos was produced by the Electoral Commission in the run-up to the 2021 election, covering topics like registering to vote, completing ballot papers and COVID-19 safety measures at polling stations.
- In 2021, Returning Officers used social media and other platforms to provide information on voting to BSL users.
- The Electoral Commission provided guidance to Returning Officers and other Polling Station staff, including an accessibility checklist.
- The Scottish Government has worked with partner organisations to promote awareness of the challenges faced by BSL users at elections.

13.2 Actions and outcomes

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
65	<p>Evaluate the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland) used in the Local Government elections in 2017 to ensure that it meets the needs of BSL users* who wish to stand for selection and election, and make any necessary changes in time for the next Scottish Parliament election in 2021.</p>	<p>The Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland) is administered by Inclusion Scotland with funding provided by the Scottish Government. Inclusion Scotland produced an evaluation report for the operation of the fund in 2017, and have drafted a report (as yet unpublished) for the 2021 Scottish Parliament Election.</p> <p>In the 2017 Scottish Local Government elections, there were 39 disabled candidates supported by the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland). Of these candidates, 15 were elected in 12 different councils. One BSL user received an award in 2017.</p> <p>While no recipients of the AEOFS awards were elected to the Scottish Parliament in the 2021 election, it is promising that 14 recipients became regional list candidates and 5 recipients were constituency candidates in the election. In this round of awards, there were four BSL user recipients, of which two withdrew and didn't use any funding, and two ran for selection to be constituency candidates along with being on their party list. One award recipient for a Local Government by-election went on to be elected as the first BSL user councillor in Scotland. He is Cllr Grant Ferguson, East Kilbride Central North.</p>

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It is notable that the AEOFS as a model has drawn international interest, and that colleagues in the Welsh Government used it as a guide for developing their own Fund.

There has also been extensive work by Inclusion Scotland with political parties to remove barriers to participation for members with disabilities, including their Access to Politics Charter.

Links to the Access for Elected Office Fund, as well as similar information on accessibility and inclusion in public life, are included by Returning Officers in nomination packs for candidates.

The removal of barriers to pursuit of elected office remains an important workstream for the Scottish Government, including meeting the needs of BSL users.



Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
66	Work with election organisations, political parties and BSL users* to ensure that the needs of BSL users* are being met, enabling them to participate fully in politics.	<p>The Scottish Government works with the Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel, Inclusion Scotland, the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board (EMB) to promote awareness of the challenges faced by BSL users at elections. Inclusion Scotland attended meetings of the SPPPP to discuss these issues, and encourage attendees to sign up to their Access to Politics Charter.</p> <p>We have also engaged through the EMB on the work undertaken by electoral professionals in this regard. In addition to the information campaigns by the Electoral Commission outlined in Action 67 below, Returning Officers used social media and other platforms to communicate information on voting to BSL users. Electoral Registration Officers provided information on postal voting through a TV advert which provided information of particular relevance during the pandemic, a subtitled version of which was made available on social media.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
67	<p>Work with the Electoral Commission in ensuring improved information about voting for BSL users* is made available in time for the next Scottish Parliament election in 2021 and review whether it has been effective.</p>	<p>The Electoral Commission worked extensively to ensure BSL users were provided with the information they needed ahead of the election. This included a series of BSL videos based on the information booklet sent to all households. The videos cover registering to vote, how to complete the ballot papers, what to expect when voting in terms of COVID-19 safety measures and other important information. They are available on the Electoral Commission's YouTube channel here. Links to these videos were shared extensively across social media platforms and with partners in the stakeholder community.</p> <p>The Commission also provides extensive guidance to electoral professionals, and the Polling Station Handbook included specific information to help Returning Officers support voters with disabilities, including an accessibility checklist for setup at polling stations.</p> <p>As a result of provisions in the Scottish Elections (Reform) Act 2020, the Commission must include an evaluation of the accessibility arrangements and outcomes in their reports on Scottish elections. The evaluation process will include contributions from the stakeholder community and people with disabilities, as well as continuing engagement with the Scottish Government on best practice and lessons learned.</p>

Action No.	Action	Update June 2021
68	Work with the political parties, encouraging them to produce election information in BSL in time for the next Scottish Parliament election in 2021.	As noted in Action 66 above, the Scottish Government has worked with the SPPPP to promote consideration of these important issues. The Electoral Commission report on accessibility at the recent Scottish Parliament election will also provide useful detail on actions taken to support disabled candidates and voters in 2021.
69	Promote public appointments as a way of participating in public life by producing information about public appointments in BSL, and promoting public appointments specifically to BSL users*.	In 2019 we commissioned Deaf Action to produce a video on public appointments specifically for Deaf and Deafblind BSL users which is hosted on the public appointments website (Appointed for Scotland).
70	Ensure that the Scottish Government guidance about board appointments includes specific reference to BSL users*.	The public appointments website (Appointed for Scotland) signposts Deaf and Deafblind BSL users to the contactSCOTLAND-BSL, the on-line British Sign Language interpreting service.

14. Conclusion

Next Steps

In the four years since the publication of Scotland's first ever BSL National Plan, significant progress has been made towards making our country more inclusive and supportive of BSL users. The language enjoys a higher profile than ever before in public life, and is ever more visible in media and communications, not least through innovations in technology which have made access to interpretation easier and faster.

We know, however, that there is still a great deal of work to do. Many of the actions defined in the 2017 Plan remain wholly or partly incomplete. The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed some actions, including the publication of this Progress Report, originally scheduled for 2020. In the interim, the BSL Partnership has assessed and reported on the progress made in various sectors.

In the coming months, COVID-19 recovery plans will be clarified, developed and implemented, with input from the public through accessible consultations. The Scottish Government will consider outstanding actions in the BSL National Plan, and work to get these back on track. Using reports from the BSL Partnership on the progress of work in local authorities, NHS health boards and further and higher education institutions, we will define the next steps which must be taken to ensure access for signers in all areas of life in Scotland.

Achieving our aspirations for BSL in Scotland will take time, effort and engagement. This is a collective and collaborative process, and we would like to thank the BSL Partnership for their vital work, as well as the local authorities, public bodies, universities and colleges who have published and effected their own plans.

Finally, we are grateful to the many signers who have fed into the work, in so many different areas of life, as we strive to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users.



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