

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

25 October 2018

Report by Deputy Chief Executive

EAST RENFREWSHIRE BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN: 2018-2024

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To seek Cabinet approval for the draft East Renfrewshire British Sign Language Plan: 2018-2024, Annex 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet: -
- (a) notes the legal duty on listed public bodies in Scotland, including the Council, to prepare and publish British Sign Language Plans;
 - (b) approves the attached East Renfrewshire British Sign Language Plan: 2018-2024; and
 - (c) agrees that future updates on the implementation of the Plan are included in Updates on the Council's Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes reports.

BACKGROUND

3. On 17 September 2015, Parliament passed the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. The Act received Royal Assent on 22 October 2015. The aim of the Act is to promote the use of British Sign Language, BSL.

4. The passage of the Act was followed, in October 2018, by the publication of the Scottish Government's British Sign Language [BSL National Plan 2017-2023](#), containing 10 long-term goals and 70 actions to take the country closer to these goals. It is stated in the National Plan that the Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit.

5. The Act requires public bodies listed in the schedule of the Act, including local authorities, to prepare and publish their own BSL plans in connection with the exercise of their functions by October 2018 and to provide for the manner in which such plans are to be prepared and for their review and updating. These must:

- Involve BSL users (including those who use the tactile form of the language) and those who represent them;
- Ensure that the consultation on the draft plan is accessible to D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users; and
- Be published in BSL as well as in English in both draft form, and in final form.
- Be refreshed within 6 months of the publication of new National Plans and no longer than every 6 years

6. The legislation says that BSL plans should ‘try to achieve consistency’ with the BSL National Plan 2017-2023. It also says that BSL plans of listed authorities should take account of any guidance issued by Scottish Ministers.

7. Scottish Government Guidance to Local authorities advises Local authorities to consider structuring their BSL plans under the ten long-term goals. Local plans are required to be tailored to local circumstances, opportunities and priorities.

8. Actions to be taken by organisations which provide services on behalf of local authorities (such as leisure services) can also be included in local plans.

9. Figures from the 2011 Census indicate that 133 people in East Renfrewshire stated that British Sign Language was used in the home.

DEVELOPING AND PUBLISHING THE EAST RENFREWSHIRE PLAN

10. An initial draft of the plan was compiled, following submissions from the following departments/ partners: Education Department; East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership; East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust; Environment Department; Corporate and Community Services. These were discussed in a BSL community engagement event jointly held with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde on 22 August. Following that, a revised plan was discussed with Deaf BSL users on 26 September.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

11. The Scottish Government has allocated to each local authority £11,000 in the 2018-19 financial year for the work toward preparing and publishing local plans. Since the next set of Plans is not due until 2024, resourcing in future years are to be subject to future discussions.

EQUALITIES

12. This Plan has relevance to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) in so far as some members of those groups could be Deaf or Deafblind. Delivering the outcomes identified in this Plan will contribute to fulfilling the three needs of the Council’s Equality duties, namely, Eliminating Discrimination, Promoting Equality and Fostering Good Relations.

CONCLUSION

13. The Council’s BSL Plan, developed in partnership with BSL users, and relevant statutory partners will act as a useful vehicle to improve the life chances of local Deaf/Deafblind BSL users and contribute to the Scottish Government’s ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit.

RECOMMENDATION

14 It is recommended that the Cabinet: -

- (a) notes the legal duty on listed public bodies in Scotland, including the Council, to prepare and publish British Sign Language Plans;

- (b) approves the attached East Renfrewshire British Sign Language Plan: 2018-2024; and
- (c) agrees that future updates on the implementation of the Plan are included in Updates on the Council's Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes reports.

REPORT AUTHORS

Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive, 0141 577 3159
Caroline.innes@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Kofi Tordzro, Corporate Equality Manager, 0141 577 3344
Cabinet contact: Councillor Paul O'Kane, Depute Leader of the Council – Tel No:- 0141 577 3108

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**East Renfrewshire
British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024**

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SECTION 2:

2.1 Introduction

This is the BSL Plan for East Renfrewshire Council, as required by British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. It sets out actions the Council and its relevant partners will take over the period 2018-2024.

It is framed around the same long-term goals as the [BSL National Plan 2017-2023](#)., published on 24 October 2017, which was developed through extensive engagement with D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

It is the product of conversations between the relevant Council departments; BSL users; East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership; NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde; and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust.

2.2 The East Renfrewshire Context

Local Area

East Renfrewshire is situated to the south of the city of Glasgow. It covers an area of 67 square miles; 85% of which is rural land with the remaining area comprising mainly residential suburbs. The towns of Barrhead (17,610) Neilston (5,170) and the village of Uplawmoor (610) lie to the west of the authority. Newton Mearns (26,600), Giffnock (12,300), Thornliebank (4,070), Clarkston (9,860), Netherlee (4,600) and Stamperland (3,640) are located to the east together with the smaller villages of Busby (3,250), Eaglesham (3,400) and Waterfoot (1,330).

Demographic Context

In 2017 the population of East Renfrewshire was 94,760. Data from the 2011 Census shows that 133 people in East Renfrewshire live in households where British Sign Language is used.

The council's overall population is projected to rise by over 17% over the 25 year period to 2041, over three times the national average rate of 5.3%. This has implications for many services that cater for a broad section of the public. Over the same period:

- The number of children is forecast to rise by 17.8% compared to a drop of 1.5% for Scotland overall – affecting services such as school education.
- The number of people of working age is forecast to rise by 13.8% compared to 1.1% for Scotland – affecting numerous local issues including demand for housing and transport.
- The number of people aged 75 or over is forecast to rise by 81.5% compared to 78.6% for Scotland – affecting health and social care services for older people.

East Renfrewshire has the second highest life expectancy in Scotland. East Renfrewshire is also one of Scotland's most ethnically and culturally diverse areas – with significant Muslim and Jewish communities.

Deprivation

Although East Renfrewshire is a relatively prosperous area, it does have pockets of deprivation. Eight of the 122 data zones (population units) across East Renfrewshire are among the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. These areas include parts of Auchenback, Arthurlie, Dunterlie and Dovecothall in Barrhead as well as parts of West Neilston and Uplawmoor. Reducing inequalities and their impact and making sure no one is left behind is a key focus underpinning all the work that we do. The council continues to address deprivation-related issues, for example through focused activity by the education service and engagement with community bodies.

Our Strategic Outcomes

Our Community Plan is structured around five strategic priority areas following the key life stages of our residents. The priority areas and their associated outcomes are as follows:

Early Years and Vulnerable Young People

All children in East Renfrewshire experience a stable and secure childhood and succeed.

Learning, life & work

East Renfrewshire residents are healthy and active and have the skills for learning, life and work.

Economy & Environment

East Renfrewshire is a thriving, attractive and sustainable place for residents and businesses.

Safer, Supported Communities

East Renfrewshire residents are safe and live in supportive communities.

Older People

Older people and people with long term conditions in East Renfrewshire are valued; their voices are heard and they enjoy full and positive lives.

In developing this BSL Plan the Council and its partners are committed to ensuring that these outcomes apply equally for Deaf and Deafblind people. As such, the Council and its partners, through this plan, will work towards protecting and supporting BSL, including in its tactile form.

2.3 How We Developed the Plan

The plan has been developed with active engagement and encouragement from BSL users. An initial draft of the plan was compiled, following submissions from the following departments/ partners: Education Department; East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership; East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust; Environment Department; Corporate and Community Services. These were discussed in a BSL community engagement event jointly held with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde on 22 August. Following that, a revised plan was discussed with Deaf BSL users on 26 September.

The comments received from BSL users when our draft commitments were being consulted on included the following:

- The Council and its partners should make greater effort in using the website to share relevant information with Deaf and Deafblind people.
- In providing information in BSL, it should be remembered that finger-spelling is different from BSL.
- Deaf people should be given the opportunity to choose interpreters so as to prevent uncomfortable situations such as those pertaining to privacy and confidentiality.
- Accessing services is a major area of concern to Deaf people. They have had difficulties accessing vital service such as health services due to lack of interpreters.
- Local Deaf people willing to assist should be encouraged to help produce relevant BSL signed videos on support available dealing with some of the most difficult challenges faced by Deaf people.
- It should be remembered that not all Deaf people can access information delivered in video formats.
- Service providers to make more effort at improving their knowledge of BSL and Deaf culture so as to reduce isolation experienced by Deaf people and make accessing services easier for them.
- Greater effort is required to understand the diversity of needs among Deaf people.
- Support is urgently required for carers of Deaf people who are experiencing psychological stress.
- Providers of services such as education should be made aware not to use children as interpreters between parents and service providers.
- Deaf people would prefer to be referred to as Deaf people rather than Hearing-impaired, Hard-of –Hearing, Partially Deaf, Profoundly Deaf etc
- The Council should employ Deaf Teachers in local schools
- Deaf people have very few opportunities to have their frustrated life-stories heard by those in power.
- Deaf pupils should be taught correct finger-spelling so as to enhance their English language skills.

- Deaf pupils need appropriate teaching styles to meet their learning needs;
- Placing a deaf pupil in mainstream education without relevant support such as BSL users or Deaf teachers can negatively affect their life chances.
- A deaf person experiencing bullying without provision and support to convey their feelings could end up being portrayed as the perpetrator.
- The Council should include subtitles, where possible, in the videos it displays on its website.
- Deaf people would like to be assisted to organise and pursue advocacy on their needs

SECTION 3: The Long-term Goals of the BSL Plan

The Plan has been developed towards contributing to achieving the following national long-term goals:

- Across all our services, information and services will be accessible to BSL users.
- The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a D/deaf or Deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL.
- Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child's education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school.
- BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish workforce, so that they can fulfil their potential, and improve Scotland's economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career.
- BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives, and to make informed choices at every stage of their lives.
- BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland.
- BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Scotland, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies.
- BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile systems in Scotland.

SECTION 4: OUR COMMITMENTS

4.1: Across all our services

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users”

Our Actions

By 2024, we will:

- Use existing evidence we have on information gaps for BSL users to establish baselines for measuring progress.
- Have in place, some positive action measures for Improving access to our information and services for BSL users, including making our website more accessible to BSL users; increasing the number of signed videos on our services; promoting greater use of ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’, the free online interpreting video relay services to employees, Elected Members and BSL users; and delivering appropriate training to staff to increase awareness of BLS and Deaf culture

4.2: Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

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

Our Actions

By 2022, we will:

- Provide Early Years staff, including Family First and POPP staff, with training and awareness raising on Deaf and Deafblind BSL and information about supports available to families of D/deaf and Deafblind children.

By 2023, we will:

- Ensure families of D/deaf and Deafblind children have access to BSL resources as early as possible in their child’s life.
- Work with BSL stakeholders to develop resources and information that are appropriate and relevant to their needs.
- Provide information about Social Work Request for Assistance and Child Protection services for children using signed videos.

- Promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services contact SCOTLAND-BSL to Children and Families staff.
- Provide Children and Families staff including Family First and POPP staff with access to training and awareness raising on Deaf and Deafblind BSL and information about supports available to families of D/deaf and Deafblind children.

By 2024, we will:

- In partnership with the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, ensure our children’s services use BSL resources and advice within programmes such as *Bookbug*, so that parents are supported to interact with their child during this critical development phase.
- Ensure families of D/deaf and Deafblind children have access to nationally developed BSL resources as early as possible in their child’s life.

By 2024, we will:

- In partnership with the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, ensure our children’s services use BSL resources and advice within programmes such as *Bookbug*, so that parents are supported to interact with their child during this critical development phase.
- Ensure families of D/deaf and Deafblind children have access to nationally developed BSL resources as early as possible in their child’s life.

4.3: School Education

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

“Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child’s education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school”

Our Actions

By 2021, we will:

- Audit the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff across all our schools, including those working with D/deaf and Deafblind pupils, and provide opportunities for teachers to provide BSL learning in schools.

By 2022, we will:

- Contribute to the SCILT programme of work to support the learning of BSL as part of policy development on Languages provision.
- Take account of any national guidance for teachers or support staff working with pupils who use BSL, in order to improve their experiences across all aspects of the curriculum, within and outwith the school day.

By 2023, we will:

- Provide guidance and support to schools to implement a suite of SQA qualifications in BSL.
- Implement advice and guidance from Education Scotland to improve the way that schools engage with parents and carers who use BSL, in order that they can be fully involved in all aspects of their child's education and school life.

4.4: Training, Work and Social Security

We share the long-term goal for training, work and social security set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish workforce, so that they can fulfil their potential, and improve Scotland's economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career”

Our Actions**By 2024, we will:**

- Work EastRen, the Council's employability services, and our Business Gateway team will signpost clients to a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process.
- Via the Local Employability Partnership groups we will work with partners who deliver employment services, and with employer groups already supporting employability to help signpost them to specific advice on the needs of BSL users.
- Raise awareness locally via our partnership network, of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme with employers and with BSL users (including those on Modern Apprenticeships) so that they can benefit from the support it provides.
- Track young people in partnership with Skills Development Scotland
- We will have transition plans for BSL users in place

- Work with local employment services to help highlight specific advice and guidance required by BSL users

4.5: Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

We share the long-term goal for health, mental health and wellbeing set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives, and to make informed choices at every stage of their lives”

Our Actions

By 2022, we will:

- Provide Health staff with access to training and awareness raising on Deaf and Deafblind BSL and information about supports available to families of D/deaf and Deafblind children
- Ensure families of D/deaf and Deafblind children have access to nationally developed BSL resources as early as possible in their child’s life.

By 2024, we will:

- Signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL (to be produced by NHS Health Scotland and NHS24), and b) develop complementary information in BSL about local provision, as appropriate.
- Work with NHSGGC and BSL stakeholders to develop appropriate information in appropriate format, signed information on the internet, provision of easy read information.
- Ensure psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users.

4.6: Culture and the Arts

We share the long-term goal for culture and the arts set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland”

Our Actions

By 2024, we will:

- Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.

- Encourage and support BSL users to consider a career in culture and the arts.
- Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on relevant websites and at venues.
- Improve access to the historical environment, cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users.
- Work with local cultural providers and partners across East Renfrewshire to increase the availability of signed performances and enhance individuals' access to engagement in cultural activities.
- Explore the use of technology to enhance the experience of BSL users when visiting exhibitions or accessing museum collections.
- Include recognition of the needs of BSL users in future service developments and building alterations, including new builds.

4.7: Democracy

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

“BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Scotland, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies”

Our Actions

By 2024, we will:

- Take opportunities to promote the Access to Elected Office Fund locally, which can meet the additional costs of BSL users wishing to stand for selection or election in local or Scottish Parliament elections
- Take positive action, including community capacity-building, to improve the participation of BSL users in relevant Council democratic and co-production processes such as Community Councils, Community Engagement for Service Planning and Participatory budgeting
- Take positive action, including capacity-building; promotion of awareness of the Access to Elected Office Fund; and facilitation of greater contact with Elected Politicians to increase the confidence and capacity of BSL users interested in standing for Elected Office and other public appointments.

4.8: Justice

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

“BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile systems in Scotland”

By 2024, we will

- Ensure that adequate BSL provision is available for BSL users
- Identify and implement relevant improvement actions from the BSL-led Justice Advisory Group, with a view to meeting the needs of Deaf and Deafblind people in the field of Justice

5. Contact for Information

If you want more information on the plan, please contact Farkhanda Chaudhry, Equalities Development Officer, Council Headquarters, 1 Rouken Glen Road, Giffnock, G46 6UG.

Email: Farkhanda.Chaudhry@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01415778454

You can find BSL version of this plan by clicking [here](#)

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)
[contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)

SECTION 6: What happens next?

Progress on the implementation of this plan will be included in our Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming and Outcomes Reports

The Council and its partners are grateful for the support and encouragement from BSL users towards the development of this plan which we consider to be a living document. We are, therefore, committed to continued engagement with BSL users and other stakeholders around implementing the actions identified in the plan and providing feedback on progress which can be fed into national progress reports.

If you would like to comment on the contents of the Plan and how well our commitments are being delivered, you can do this in a number of ways:

- In BSL you can upload a video on to You Tube at www.youtube.co.uk and send the link to either of the following email addresses:
- In English you can comment by email to: ContacBSLt@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or by post using the address on the contact information section above.