



**A Shared British Sign Language (BSL)  
Local Plan for Orkney 2018-2024**



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# 1. Introduction

The British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023, was published 24 October 2017. It is framed around ten long-term goals which were produced in consultation with BSL users across Scotland.

As required by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, we have produced a BSL Local Plan which sets out actions which will improve the way BSL users find out about our services and ensure BSL users have equal access to them.

This Shared BSL Local Plan for Orkney outlines the collective actions for Orkney Islands Council (OIC) including the Education Authority, Orkney College UHI and the Integration Joint Board (IJB), known as Orkney Health and Care.

We have strong working links with NHS Orkney who are publishing a separate BSL Local Plan and will continue to take a partnership approach in the delivery of the outcomes of both BSL Local Plans.

We share the long-term goals for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, and some of the key actions we plan to put in place include:

- Ensuring that the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services contactSCOTLAND-BSL is widely highlighted to staff and to local BSL users.
- Reviewing our translation and interpreting guidance so that our staff know how to make best use of these services.
- Taking steps to ensure that school staff learn how to improve engagement with parents who use BSL, so they can get further involved in their child's education.
- Offering all staff opportunities to learn about BSL and Deaf culture and awareness including on-line learning.
- Promote the use and understanding of BSL across Orkney.

## 2. About us

### 2.1. A profile of Orkney

Orkney comprises 70 or so islands and skerries, of which up to 19 may be inhabited depending on the time of year. The estimated total population of Orkney as of June 2017 was 22,000 an increase of 0.7% from 21,850 in 2016. Over the period 2016 to 2026, the age group that is projected to increase the most is the 75+ group. In terms of size, the 45 to 64 group is projected to remain the largest.<sup>1</sup>

In comparisons of the 2001 and 2011 Census figures, Orkney was one of the councils to experience the largest increase in people reporting a limiting health problem or disability. The 2011 Census figures show that Orkney recorded the lowest number of BSL users with 25 indicating that they use BSL at home. These figures illustrate all users aged 3 and over and include those using BSL for a variety

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<sup>1</sup> Source: National Records of Scotland Orkney Islands Council Area Profile

of reasons including Deafness or partial hearing loss, Blindness and Learning disability.<sup>2</sup>

The 2011 Census was the first to include a question on the use of BSL at home.

## **2.2. Rationale for a Shared BSL Local Plan in Orkney**

A number of organisations across Orkney deliver public services to our local communities. In delivering services, these organisations must ensure that BSL is supported and promoted so that people whose first or preferred language is BSL, are fully involved in daily and public life as active, healthy citizens and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

Considering the close working links between many public-sector organisations, particularly in an island context, it was proposed that closer working around the development of BSL Local Plans should be undertaken. Crucially, this way forward is driven by a focus on improving the end user experience in terms of consistency and impact. Therefore, a decision was taken that public-sector organisations in Orkney could develop a shared BSL Local Plan whilst maintaining individual accountability for their part.

A short-life Working Group was established to draft this plan which included officers from different Council service areas and partner organisations.

The group agreed that the actions outlined in this plan should be proportionate, practical and beneficial and as such will reflect the 10 long-term goals of the national plan and prioritise them to suit local need. The main actions of the local plan look to the future to create a more inclusive community, working predominantly through services for children and young people.

The overarching BSL Local Plan builds on the already established partnership working relationships operating in Orkney and outlines the actions and activities to be undertaken to provide improvements for BSL users. It also seeks to promote greater inclusion for those who face communication barriers.

## **2.3. Engagement and Consultation**

Taking into account the views of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users on the plan is crucial to ensuring it meets their needs.

The BSL Working Group undertook engagement and consultation in the development of this final plan using a variety of methods including:

- Attendance at the Deaf Awareness Week event in Orkney to gather early feedback on the actions of the national plan.
- National Deaf Children's Society engagement with school pupils.
- On-line feedback on the draft local plan.
- Social media.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Scottish Government Overview of Equality Results from the 2011 Census Release 2

- Sharing feedback and have your say event in conjunction with Orkney Deaf Children's Society.
- A BSL version of the draft plan.

Feedback numbers were very low in relation to the consultation and engagement activities. Some comments received extended the aspiration beyond the scope set out in the national outcomes and will therefore be considered as part of any future development of the plan.

Orkney's first Shared BSL Local Plan aims to take a proportionate response to meet the requirements of the National Plan and the following outcomes reflect this.

## **3. A Shared BSL Local Plan for Orkney**

### **3.1. 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.”

#### **3.1.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

Analyse existing evidence we have about BSL users in our organisation; identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress.

Include a question in our equalities questionnaires and monitoring forms in relation to the use and understanding of BSL which the Scottish Government is helping develop for the next census.

Improve access to our information and services for BSL users, including making our website more accessible to BSL users. This will include:

- Improving accessibility of videos that provide information about available services.
- Reviewing guidance on accessing interpretation and translation services for BSL users.
- Using the intranet and internet to promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’ to staff and to local BSL users.
- Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL and Deaf awareness training.

#### **3.1.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Executive Support and Head of HR and Performance.

## **3.2. 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.”

### **3.2.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Provide early years staff with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and about resources that are available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or Deafblind child.
- Ensure our families of D/deaf and Deafblind children have access to nationally developed BSL resources as early as possible in their child’s life.
- Ensure our children’s services have access to nationally developed BSL resources and advice within key programmes such as Bookbug.
- Ensure any onsite childcare facilities are accessible and welcoming to parents and children who use BSL.

### **3.2.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Education.

### **3.3. 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.”

#### **3.3.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Contribute to the Scottish Government’s investigation of the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff working with D/deaf and Deafblind pupils in schools, and take account of any new guidance for teachers or support staff working with pupils who use BSL.
- OIC’s Pupil Support Service will continue to contribute to CRIDE (Consortium for Research into Deaf Education) which already collects this data.
- Continue to investigate and support, through OIC;s Pupil Support Service in collaboration with schools, opportunities for learning BSL in schools.
- Take forward, through OIC’s Pupil Support Service, advice developed by Education Scotland to improve the way that teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and to ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can get further involved in their child’s education.
- Be proactive, through OIC’s Hearing Support Service, in seeking views of parents who use BSL with regards to parental involvement in education should the opportunity arise.
- Contribute to the Scotland’s National Centre for Languages (SCILT) programme of work to support the learning of BSL in schools for hearing pupils as part of the 1+2 programme, including sharing best practice and guidance.
- The Pupil Support Service in collaboration with schools will offer opportunities to pilot BSL as part of the 1+2 language initiative as and when such programmes are developed.
- Support and encourage BSL users leaving school and their parents/guardians to attend college.

#### **3.3.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Education.



### **3.4. Post-School Education**

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

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

#### **3.4.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Take action to ensure that college students and prospective college students who use BSL are properly supported.
- Take on board guidance and advice produced by the Scottish Funding Council and others to ensure that college staff are aware of their responsibilities towards BSL users.
- Invite regular feedback from college students and prospective college students who use BSL over the coming year to 18 months after adopting this plan.
- Commit to reviewing and refreshing our actions and to include more local actions based on feedback, after the national plan progress report (due October 2020).
- Provide assistance to college students who use BSL to help them complete Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) application forms.

#### **3.4.1. Directorate Lead/s**

Orkney College.

### **3.5. 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.”

#### **3.5.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Ensure Pupil Support Services signpost pupils and students to information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process.
- Work with relevant 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 of the UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ (AtW) scheme with employers, students and with BSL users (including those on Modern Apprenticeships) so that they can benefit from the support it provides.

#### **3.5.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of HR and Performance.

### **3.6. 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.”

#### **3.6.1 Our actions**

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 develop complementary information in BSL about local provision, as appropriate.
- Ensure staff groups have access to BSL interpreting support and educational programmes.
- Ensure local information networks/websites direct people to the Scottish learning resource and that there are links on the relevant websites.
- Through integration boards, ensure that psychological therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users.
- Investigate how college advice and counselling services can improve accessibility to students who use BSL.
- Ensure local information networks/websites signpost to the Scottish Government ‘NHS Inform’ on BSL.
- Take steps to improve access to information about sport, and to local sports facilities and sporting opportunities by working with partners to raise awareness of BSL support and resources for staff and service users.
- Ensure that any local work to tackle social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users.

#### **3.6.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Health and Community Care and Head of Education.

## **3.7. Transport**

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

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

### **3.7.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Encourage transport providers to have access to technology to support communication with BSL users.
- Work with relevant partners who deliver transport to help signpost them to specific advice on the needs of BSL users.
- Take account of relevant feedback and recommendations from Disability Equality Scotland’s Accessible Travel Summit.
- Promote accessible travel information across the college campus.

### **3.7.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Marine Services, Engineering and Transport.

### **3.8. 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.”

#### **3.8.1 Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Work in partnership with providers of cultural events and activities in Orkney to increase the accessibility for BSL users and to promote the principles of inclusive communication.
- Explore the use of technology to enhance the experience of BSL users and those facing communication barriers when visiting exhibitions or accessing museum collections.
- Explore how to make extra-curricular and recreational activities offered within the college accessible to students who use BSL.

#### **3.8.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Education.

### **3.9. Justice**

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

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

#### **3.9.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Ensure that partners are aware of BSL support services through the Orkney Community Justice Partnership.
- Take account of advice developed by BSL-led Justice Advisory group, to support and meet the needs of BSL users.

#### **3.9.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Children and Families and Criminal Justice.

### **3.10. 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.”

#### **3.10.1. Our actions**

By 2024, we will:

- Provide links on websites to national information on the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland), to provide signposting to BSL users who wish to stand for selection and election in local or Scottish Parliament elections.
- Ensure BSL training information provided by the Electoral Commission is cascaded to all relevant electoral staff.
- Ensure any BSL video information on voting processes, developed by the Electoral Commission is available (or links provided) on partner websites.

#### **3.10.2. Directorate Lead/s**

Head of Executive Support.