

Scottish Borders Council: British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

Contents

Foreword by Scottish Borders Council’s Champion for the Deaf Community	3
Introduction to Scottish Borders Council’s British Sign Language Plan 2018-2024	4
Development of Scottish Borders Council’s British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024	5
National British Sign Language (BSL) Plan	6
Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024	7
Going Forward	8

Foreword by Scottish Borders Council's Champion for the Deaf Community

I am pleased to present Scottish Borders Council: British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018 - 2024.

Many years ago, I chose to learn BSL (level one) at Borders College. I may not use it every day, but it has enabled me to speak to my BSL friends and colleagues without a barrier.

The Scottish Government aims to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL (British Sign Language) users to live, learn, work and visit.

As a Council, we need to ensure that all residents of the Scottish Borders are able to access our services seamlessly. While the number of BSL users may be small, we have to provide parity of service to them. A language barrier should never be the reason someone cannot live actively in their community.

This BSL Plan is our part in helping to make that happen.

Cllr. Elaine Thornton-Nicol
Scottish Borders Council's Champion for the Deaf Community
October 2018

Introduction to Scottish Borders Council's British Sign Language Plan 2018-2024

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for (British Sign Language) BSL users to live, learn, work and visit. This means that people whose first or preferred language is BSL will be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens, and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

The [BSL \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years, showing how they will promote and support BSL. This is the first BSL Local Plan for Scottish Borders Council (SBC) developed in co-ordination with NHS Borders, Borders College and the local BSL community.

Throughout the plan, we refer to 'BSL users'. This covers all people whose first or preferred language is BSL, including those who receive the language in a tactile¹ form due to sight loss.

BSL is a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary. It has its own dialects and rich variation. Most importantly, it is a language which enables many of our D/deaf (D - people born deaf, d - those who become deaf) and Deafblind citizens to learn, work, parent, be creative, live life to the full, and to make their contribution to our communities, our culture and our economy.

This plan identifies the actions that Scottish Borders Council will take between 2018 and 2024 to comply with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. SBC took a holistic approach to developing its BSL plan, with a focus on embedding BSL within its approach to customer services, communication, and training.

A BSL version of the Scottish Borders Council BSL Plan can be found on the Council's website. www.scotborders.gov.uk/BSLplan

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

¹ **Tactile BSL** is used by those whose first and preferred language is BSL. It has its own BSL grammatical structure, syntax, lexicon, vocabulary, and emanates from the BSL community, for use by those BSL users who can no longer see and have to adapt to using tactile means.

Development of Scottish Borders Council's British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

The Scottish Government published the [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2017-2023](#) in October of 2017, as a requirement of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. Scottish Borders Council, like other public bodies (specifically NHS Borders and Borders College) is required to produce a BSL Plan 2018-2024 by October 2018. These plans 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.

The legislation says that BSL plans should 'try to achieve consistency' with the BSL National Plan 2017-2023.

According to the 2011 Census, the Scottish Borders had **228** people aged 3 and over that identified that BSL was a language used at home.

Given that the BSL community in the Scottish Borders is very small, the three local public bodies (Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and Borders College) agreed to have joint approach to BSL Plan development.

To help develop of the local plans with the BSL community in the Scottish Borders there was an engagement day on Saturday 21 July 2018. A video summary of the event can be seen [here](#). The event was attended by eight local BSL users. The event was jointly managed by SBC, Borders College and NHS Borders. Also in attendance were representatives from BDA (Scotland) and [ContactScotlandBSL](#).

There was also a full public [online consultation](#) for the Local BSL Plans that ran between 08 August 2018 and 26 August 2018. There were 8 respondents to the consultation all of which were positive to the proposed actions of SBC, Borders College and NHS Borders.











The SBC local BSL plan was developed with representatives of the different departments of SBC and Live Borders.

The local See Hear group has acted as the reference group for the development of the SBC BSL Plan. The See Hear group membership is comprised of representatives of the Scottish Borders community planning partnership and people with sensory impairment (primarily those that are deaf / hearing impaired and blind / partially sighted).

Contact with other Councils and the BDA (British Deaf Association – Scotland) was made to ensure SBC's BSL plan was consistent with others and following guidance from the Scottish Government.

National British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

The actions within the SBC BSL plan support the 10 long-term goals in the National BSL Plan, and are consistent with the actions in the National Plan. The 10 long-term goals in the National BSL Plan are:

Symbol	Goal Name	Goal Description
	Across all our services	Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users.
	Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare	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
	School Education	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
	Post-School Education	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)
	Training, Work and Social Security	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
	Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing	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
	Transport	BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland
	Culture and the Arts	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
	Justice	BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland
	Democracy	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

Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

SBC British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 has seven holistic actions. These actions are consistent with the ten long term goals of the National BSL plan. These actions were identified for Scottish Borders Council following consultation with the BSL community, the Scottish Borders See Hear group, Scottish Borders Council departments, Live Borders and the general public.

The actions in the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 focus on embedding BSL within its approach to customer services, communication, and training. The actions are listed in the table below along with who has the lead for each action.

No.	Action	Lead
1	BSL Users are empowered to exercise their rights in accessing SBC Services and that staff are responsive in support of these rights.	All SBC Services, SB Cares, Live Borders
2	Raise staff awareness of BSL and contactScotland-BSL	All SBC Services, SB Cares, Live Borders
3	Ensure all staff have access to relevant and appropriate training on BSL	Human Resources
4	Ensure BSL is embedded within SBC's new Customer Strategy, approved September 2018. (The Customer Strategy defines the ways in which customers will interact and do business with SBC over the next 5 years to meet changing expectations and needs, and to take full advantage of digital technology where appropriate)	Customer and Communities
5	Establish a clear Translation and Interpretation resource (which includes BSL) which is accessible by all services.	Human Resources and Communications
6	Raise awareness in all schools that BSL is part of the 1+2 language policy. (The 1 + 2 Language policy is where children are taught two languages in addition to their mother tongue)	Education
7	BSL users are able to engage and participate in democracy and cultural events.	Customer and Communities and Live Borders Electoral Registration

Going Forward

The Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 will be implemented and monitored by the Customer and Communities directorate. It is important to note that the SBC BSL Plan 2018-2024 actions focus on embedding BSL within its approach to customer services, communication, and training and relevant Community Planning Partners.

The local See Hear Strategy Group will continue to act as a reference group for the SBC BSL Plan and implementation.

Scottish Borders Council will contribute to the national progress report in 2020.