

# Ayrshire Shared **British Sign Language (BSL)** Local Plan 2018 – 2024

# SUMMARY



This shared local plan has been created with input from the following partners



# 1 Executive Summary

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for 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 British Sign Language (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 our first BSL Local Plan developed in partnership with Ayrshire College, East, North and South Ayrshire Councils, East, North and South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Ayrshire & Arran (Appendix A).

This BSL Local Plan sets out ten long-term goals for BSL in Ayrshire, covering early years and education; training and work; health, mental health and wellbeing; transport; culture and the arts; justice and democracy. It describes the actions the seven partners, mentioned previously, will take between 2018 and 2024 to make progress towards these goals, including:

- improving access to a wide range of information and public services in BSL;
- investigating the level of BSL of teachers and support staff in schools;
- enabling parents who use BSL to be fully involved in their child's education;
- improving the experience of students who use BSL, when they move from school to college, university, training and the world of work;

- improving access to health care and mental health services in BSL;
- removing obstacles to BSL users\* participating in politics and public life, for example by promoting the Access to Elected Office Fund.

*\* 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.*

## 2 Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan

The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan is a plan that reflects the BSL National Plan<sup>1</sup>, which was published on 24 October 2017. The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan sets our collective intentions in how we will improve communication and access to services for people who use BSL and work, learn and live in Ayrshire.

The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan has been developed in partnership with Deaf, Deafblind people and their supporters who live, learn and work throughout Ayrshire. This ensures that their concerns and issues are reflected throughout the Plan and this information has been translated into our actions. A number of meetings and engagement events took place over the course of the development of the plan to ensure the views of Deaf, Deafblind people and their supporters were considered.

We will publish a progress report in 2021 and incorporate any additional actions identified through this report which we require to take to deliver our intention by 2024 in line with the requirements of the BSL (Scotland) Act.

This partnership approach will support actions that are cross cutting and will impact on all partners to ensure consistency and cohesiveness. These have been included under Scottish Public Services such as:

- training and raising awareness for staff;
- promotion of contact SCOTLAND-BSL<sup>2</sup>;
- use of technology; and

- gathering data to meet service user need.

This partnership approach will also flow through actions within the ten long-term goals.

## Scottish Public Services

- Work in partnership to better collect, and where appropriate share, data on service user need to ensure individual's access and communication needs are met.
- Provide Deaf Awareness training for all staff, particularly frontline staff.
- Jointly promote contactScotland-BSL to staff and service users.
- Develop a specific BSL page on public websites with information in BSL or signposting to relevant information available in BSL.
- Explore the use of technology to help meet communication support requirements.
- Conduct a scoping exercise to find out the level of BSL skills amongst staff, particularly front line staff.
- Develop and promote an accessible checklist to ensure barriers to participation in community engagement and involvement are removed.

- Ensure BSL provision is available for community engagement events.
- Establish a diverse Ayrshire-wide user network to enhance the implementation of the Ayrshire BSL Local Plan.
- Raise awareness of translation and interpretation procedures to ensure staff can readily access the appropriate communication for service users.

## Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

- Parents, carers and wider family members have access to information in relation to BSL courses.
- Establish an Ayrshire-wide Network for Deaf children and young people.
- Information on language options is available to children and their families from the point of diagnosis.

## School Education

- Pathway developed to ensure Looked After Children (LAC) receive equitable access to BSL support in school, home and care environments.
- Parents and carers have access to information in an appropriate format.
- BSL/English Interpreter support is available to enable children, young people, parents and carers to participate in wider school activities such as Parent Council meetings, school trips, Team Around the Child (TAC), Case Conferences, Children's Hearings and so on.
- BSL/English Interpreter support is available for young people to access work placements, local Careers and Further Education Events.
- Further promotion of BSL for 1 + 2 languages within the school curriculum starting from early years.

- Develop a partnership approach between education and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to better support Deaf children and young people.
- In collaboration with Deaf young people, explore the possibility of establishing an Ayrshire youth club.

## Post-School Education

- Develop links with appropriate partners to ensure that young people are tracked in relation to post-school destinations.
- Ensure college involvement with school transition meetings where appropriate.
- Work with colleagues in other colleges and universities to ensure effective transitions from college for Deaf students.
- Ensure access to college open events and visits for prospective Deaf students.
- Ensure that Deaf students are supported throughout their learning journey. This includes providing support at application and interview stage and support in applying for bursary and SAAS funding and Disabled Students' Allowance as required.
- Ensure that learning and teaching materials that rely on audio output are provided in BSL where required.

## Training, Work and Social Security

- Ensure regular meetings of the Transition Forum to support an easy transition from school to a positive destination.
- Promote Ayrshire Disability Inclusive Confident Employers (DICE) to staff as a resource for expert advice on initiatives such as 'Access to work'.

## Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Improve the accessibility of telehealth systems to support people to self-manage long term conditions at home.
- Signpost BSL users to available Mental Health support.
- Provide information on language and communication support at point of diagnosis for families.
- Raise awareness of the rights of young people to access BSL/English Interpreters when accessing healthcare, in particular, GPs.
- Develop information, in collaboration with Deaf children and young people, regarding the importance of attending audiology appointments.
- Use social media to share information on available mental health support.
- Palliative and end of life care information and care plans co-produced by Deaf people and Deaf sector organisations.

## Transport

- Explore technological solutions to support private transport providers to communicate with BSL users.
- Ensure taxi providers licensing training incorporates BSL awareness.

## Culture and the Arts

- Increase availability of signed events and performances.
- Explore the use of technology to enhance experiences at exhibitions and museums.

## Justice

- Ensure BSL users have appropriate information to support their access to the Civil, Juvenile and Criminal Justice system.

- Ensure appropriately trained BSL/English Interpreters are available within Civil, Juvenile and criminal justice settings.

## Democracy

- Ensure BSL training information provided by the Electoral Commission is cascaded to all relevant electoral staff.
- Promote information on voting processes in appropriate formats.
- Provide political parties with Scottish Government guidance to ensure engagement is appropriate to allow BSL users to be informed and actively involved in politics.
- Promote the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland).

1 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00526382.pdf>

2 <https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>



# Appendix A

## Partnership Approach to BSL Plan

Below is some information on the eight partners involved in the shared BSL plan.

### Ayrshire College

Ayrshire College is a large regional college formed in 2013 from the merger of the former Ayr and Kilmarnock Colleges and the Ayrshire campuses of the former James Watt College. The College has around 900 staff spread over three large campuses in the towns of Ayr, Kilmarnock and Kilwinning, and a Skills Centre of Excellence located in a secondary school in Irvine.

Over 95% of the College's students reside in Ayrshire, and the majority of students in each of the College's main campuses live in the local authority area in which the campus is located. The College works with the three local authorities - East, North and South Ayrshire - and plays an active and key role in the corresponding Community Planning Partnerships.

Ayrshire College currently provides extended learning support (ELS) for students with additional support needs, including students who are BSL users. ELS support includes:

- Carrying out individual needs assessments for students with additional support needs and agreeing a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP)
- Supporting applications for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
- Providing equipment and demonstrating assistive technology
- Arranging BSL support
- Organising note-taking and other in class or out of class support
- Sharing PLSP information with curriculum staff, with the student's consent, and supporting staff with teaching recommendations

- Liaising with schools and other external agencies to support student transitions

The College has a preapproved register of BSL signers and a number of permanent staff members who are proficient signers. The College delivers D/deaf awareness training for staff and staff have the opportunity to apply for BSL courses. The College currently provides BSL/English Interpreters for key events including our Graduation Ceremonies.

### East Ayrshire Council

East Ayrshire Council serves just over 120,000 people living in diverse communities in both urban and rural settings. The majority of people live in mainly rural settings across some 30 small communities set against a background of some of Scotland's most spectacular scenery. East Ayrshire is rich in culture and heritage with strong transport links first class schools, excellent community and leisure facilities, five star tourist attractions and attractive green spaces.

The Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service sits within East Ayrshire Council and supports the needs of hearing impaired children and their families from diagnosis until school leaving age. Teachers of Deaf pupils and the Sign-Language Assistant visit children at home and in educational establishments throughout North, South and East Ayrshire. External interpretation services are used to support BSL users in their interaction with Council services during formal meetings and proceedings.

### East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership combined the services of NHS Ayrshire & Arran and East Ayrshire Council to develop and deliver services that are more personalised and meet the needs and aspirations of our residents. Specifically, our focus is on ensuring that children and young people get the best start in life, that people live healthier, longer lives and are supported to

be independent and included and have choice and control - no matter who they are or where they live.

The Teachers of Deaf pupils and Sign Language Assistant contribute to the development of BSL for Deaf pupils and their families and for teachers, support staff and the wider community.

### NHS Ayrshire & Arran

NHS Ayrshire & Arran want the best for our local people and our staff. We pride ourselves on improving health and providing a comprehensive range of high quality, safe, effective and person-centred health services. Our strategic direction is based on continuous improvement and services that are centred on the patient or service user. Our purpose is 'Working together to achieve the healthiest life possible for everyone in Ayrshire and Arran'.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran provides BSL interpretation to anyone who requires this support when accessing health care. This support is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week when accessing our hospitals, community based services, family doctor (GP), dentist and opticians. Due to the need to be pre-booked we are aware that pharmacy is more challenging and we will look to ways to improve this in the future.

### North Ayrshire Council

North Ayrshire Council serves a population of 137,000 residents with more than three-quarters living in urban areas or small towns with the remaining population living in rural areas. The Council's mission is 'To improve the lives of North Ayrshire people and develop stronger communities'.

External interpretation services are used to support BSL users in their interaction with Council services during formal meetings and proceedings. Sensory Awareness training (including BSL awareness) is available to staff, along with a Deaf Awareness e-learning programme. Support is provided to Council Services from the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), who provide advice and guidance to staff. Council and HSCP staff can make direct referrals for communication support via the duty system, a dedicated email address or carefirst.

Elderbank Primary School contains the Pan Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service for primary aged pupils. NAC currently fund 2.6 teachers, 3 classroom assistants and a Deaf role model.

## North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership was established to manage and monitor the joining together of community health and social care services. Through partnership working our vision is that: 'All people who live in North Ayrshire are able to have a safe, healthy and active life'.

All of our work fits within five strategic priorities. The aim of these priorities is to work together with local people to tackle the significant social and health inequalities that exist in North Ayrshire. We will meet our priorities by making changes to the Health and Care services we deliver. In doing this we will support local people to live safely at home, or in a homely setting, as close to family, friends and the local community as possible.

The Sensory Impairment Team have a dedicated 'text phone' and clients contact the service to request assistance Mon-Friday. A duty system is in place where once a week on a Wednesday clients can come into the office without an appointment for help and communication support. There are three staff members within the team who are very proficient signers. The team works across the local authority providing BSL support to clients who are accessing services and on occasion outside agencies. British Sign Language courses are provided to staff upon request.

## South Ayrshire Council

South Ayrshire Council is an ambitious, forward-looking and responsive organisation that is committed to working with partners and communities to make life better. The Council serves a population of more than 112,000 people located across a diverse area. The Council works to six strategic objectives which focus on maximising the potential of: the local economy; young people; adults and older people; communities; environment; and improving how we work as a Council. This includes our Transform South Ayrshire programme, which will help ensure customers can access information, request relevant Council Services, and complete customer transactions via easy to use self-service digital channels.

Teachers of Deaf pupils provide Deaf Awareness training and introductory BSL training for families and stakeholders. External interpretation services are used to support BSL users and their interaction with Council services as required, including formal meetings and proceedings.

## South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership brings together a wide range of health and social work services in to a single operational delivery unit. The Partnership's Integration Joint Board is responsible for planning and overseeing the delivery of a full range of community health and social work/social care services, including those for older people, adults, children and families and people in the Criminal Justice system in South Ayrshire. It is also responsible for a number of Pan-Ayrshire health services relating to Allied Health Professionals, Continence, Joint Equipment and Technology Enabled Care.