

BSL Plan 2018-2024

**CHILDREN &
YOUNG PEOPLE'S**
Commissioner
Scotland





Who we are and what we do



It's our mission to be the fierce champions for the rights of all children and young people in Scotland.

It is our job to promote and safeguard the human rights of everyone under 18, or 21 if they are in care or have care experience. The law which created the job of Children and Young People's Commissioner states that we must make sure that children and young people know about what we do and how they can communicate with us, and how we will respond. It also says that we must involve children and young people on the work we will do as well as the organisations working with, and for them.

The law also says that we must pay special attention to groups of children and young people who may not find it easy to make their views known. We take this seriously and we regularly highlight the rights of Deaf/Deafblind users in submissions to the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government. We monitor the Government's human rights obligations, particularly under international law, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Our BSL plan allows us to focus specifically on a group of children and young people whose rights are more at risk, or whose views are not always taken into account.

BSL and children's human rights



The human rights in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) are indivisible and interdependent. This means that if one right in it is impacted, others are also likely to be. BSL is Scotland's primary language for many children and young people in Scotland and there are rights in the UNCRC around the language a child or young person considers their own. For example:

Article 13 ensures the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds in a form of the child's choice;

Article 29 has implications for teaching children in their own language. Children whose main or only language is BSL have the right to access quality education from someone who is proficient in BSL and is a fully qualified teacher of the Deaf;

Article 30 underlines a child's right to use their own language to participate fully in community life; and

Article 2 underlines that the child should be protected from all forms of discrimination.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities says that linguistic minorities including BSL users, have the right to enjoy their own culture without discrimination, and have opportunities to learn their own language or to be instructed by people who use their own language.

The British Sign Language National Plan 2017- 2023 and the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 requires us to develop our own BSL plan. Our Plan sets out actions we will take between 2018 and 2024 to promote the use of BSL in our work, to improve access to information and services for BSL users and to improve involvement of BSL users in our work. The BSL National Plan, published on 24 October 2017 was developed by the Scottish Government through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those working with them.

We note that the National Plan is framed under ten long-term goals, co-produced with BSL users across Scotland and also note the recommendation to consider structuring our BSL plans under the same ten long-term goals in the BSL National Plan. We have taken this guidance into consideration.

We have engaged with young BSL users in the development of this draft plan and are clear about their advice on how we should approach involving young BSL users in our work.

Our statement on BSL



BSL is a language in its own right and BSL users, like everyone else, have the right to be involved and access information about our work without unnecessary barriers. This includes language barriers.

It is important to note the prevalent assumption that Deaf people cannot or will not be able to understand English. However, there are a substantial number of Deaf people who have not been supported or given opportunities to acquire a good standard of written English. This is due to various issues, such as an inaccessible education system and no, or little, access to incidental auditory-based learning.

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

How have we developed our BSL plan?

Our Plan was developed following consultation with young BSL users. We worked with the Scottish Parliament to hold two public events for BSL users. In line with our role we held a participative workshop for young BSL users and used the following questions to guide the discussion.

1. What is the best way for the Children's Commissioner's office to share human rights information with young BSL users?
2. How would you like us to work with you to make sure your views listened to in all of our work?
3. How can we make sure that BSL users from across Scotland have the chance to be involved in our work?

Their responses have helped to inform our BSL plan as has direct feedback on our draft Plan received during our consultation period.

- Our plan will be regularly updated as we take forward our actions and receive feedback on progress against the promises we have made.
- We will produce a progress report in 2020 and contribute to the national progress review on the National BSL Plan scheduled for 2020.
- We will continue to engage with young people who are BSL users around the effectiveness of our plan.



Our promises



Our promises are made to BSL users, although with our responsibility to promote and protect the human rights of children and young people, our focus is on children and young people.

- 1.** We will develop links with children and young people who communicate in BSL (Deaf and Deaf/ Blind) so we can learn about their concerns and feed these into our work. They have told us that they particularly like face-to-face contact, so this will be taken into account.
- 2.** We will make sure that BSL users are able to find the information they need about their rights in ways that suit them. We will make best use of available technologies to ensure our resources and website are accessible to BSL users. We will work with BSL users to check that we are producing accessible resources and we will ask for feedback on how we can do things better.
- 3.** We will communicate with BSL users in various ways including face-to-face with BSL/English interpreters, through the BSL online interpreting video relay services contact SCOTLAND-BSL and over email, social media and text where appropriate.
- 4.** We will increase our efforts to involve BSL users so that they become aware of the work of our office, including our advice function, and know how to contact us. We will involve young BSL users directly so that we can improve our service.
- 5.** We will make sure that the views of BSL users feed into our strategic approach to developing policy and we will continue to campaign for Deaf/Deafblind children's human rights, particularly around the level of BSL of teachers and support staff in schools and support for 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. We will particularly focus on the right to education as this is fundamental to children and young people who has BSL as their first language. Without the foundation of a decent standard of education, other rights are compromised.
- 6.** We will continue to make sure that BSL users can be involved in our external events, and in our Advisory Groups by arranging provision based on individual needs and requirements.
- 7.** We will commit to regular BSL training in the office and will aim to have at least one person in the office with BSL level 1 skills as a minimum.
- 8.** When arranging BSL/English interpreting, we will ensure that interpreters are registered with a professional regulatory body, such as SASLI and have appropriate experience and skills to practice in that particular setting.
- 9.** We will seek to make our office a safe and relaxed space for young people who use, or may potentially use, BSL.
- 10.** We will regularly engage with and listen to BSL users to review our progress within the plan and develop key actions.



Review



We will continue to review our Plan and make changes where we need to improve it. If you would like to give us feedback or contribute to our work with, and for BSL users, please get in touch.

You can use your preferred method of communication. This might be in person with BSL/ English interpreters, on social media, by video message, video relay via ContactScotland, text or email.

What we will do with your information

We will use the information you give us to help develop our work around BSL.

We will share your video message with a contractor to allow them to provide a translation.

We will store the comments and English translation of any video message you give us until we publish our next BSL Plan, then we will destroy it.

Please note that we would not store email addresses or contact addresses.

If you want to know more about how we will handle and protect your personal information please contact us or find out more in our Privacy Guide. We have also made this privacy guide available in BSL on our website.

The lead officer is Ezmie McCutcheon and her contact details are: Ezmie.McCutcheon@cypcs.org.uk

This Plan is available in BSL and in English, but if you require an alternative format, please let us know.



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