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**The University of the Highlands and Islands**

**BSL Plan 2018-2024**

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# **Introduction**

This is the BSL Plan for the University of the Highlands and Islands, as required by BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. It sets out the actions we will take over the period 2018-2024.

It follows the BSL National Plan, published 24 October 2017, which was developed through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

It is framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan, where these are relevant to the work of this organisation.

The University of the Highlands and Islands is a tertiary institution based on a partnership of 11 colleges and 2 research institutions, located across the Highlands and Islands, Moray, and Perthshire.

It has been agreed to create one plan which will detail consistent practice across the organisation. A working group with membership from each partner college was created to produce this plan and its actions. It will continue to meet after the plan is published to ensure actions are completed by 2024.

The plan sets broad parameters across all partners, allowing each to tailor their activities accordingly.  Some targets will be set locally, and communicated to the central working group for advice, support and analysis.

The aim of the plan is to:

* to encourage BSL users to apply to the university
* improve the support available to BSL users

Therefore, the university commits to protecting and supporting BSL, including in its tactile form.

The university has worked with other local bodies to gather views from local BSL users.

The University will continue to engage with BSL users to ensure the plan reflects their needs. The University will continue to provide feedback on progress and will contribute to the national progress report in 2020.

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British Sign Language (BSL) users can make contact via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](https://contactscotland-bsl.org/)

# **Plan Summary**

The University of the Highlands and Islands and its partner colleges will work together to achieve the actions contained within this plan. These actions will strengthen the support available for BSL users, through staff deaf awareness training and taking steps to create a more inclusive environment.

Key actions include:

* Encourage applicants to disclose they are a BSL user. Staff will arrange a meeting to discuss support requirements with the student.
* Review key information to be translated into BSL
* Encourage key staff to participate in Deaf Awareness training
* Investigate how to make extra-curricular activities more inclusive.

The university has also thought about how it can contribute to other long-term goals as outlined in the national plan. These are listed later in the plan. Some of the objectives attached to these goals contain numbers. These correlate to objectives contained within the national plan.

**Engagement and Consultation**

The University worked with Highland partners to find out what is important to BSL users. The below questions were asked:

* What is important to you or your family as BSL users?
* What barriers to BSL users face?
* What do you think public bodies can do better to promote BSL?

BSL users could respond to these questions via:

* An online survey
* Comments by email
* A drop-in event in Inverness and a focus group in Wick

Promotion included:

* Facebook
* Twitter
* a press release
* BSL video
* Communication through the BDA and local Deaf Club

**Engagement feedback**

The feedback gained from the above 3 questions is outlined below:

**What is important to you or your community?**

* To be able to access higher education
* Service should be fully accessible
* To employ BSL users in education settings

**What barriers do BSL users face?**

* A lack of interpreters

**What do you think public bodies can do better to promote BSL?**

* E-learning to be deaf user-friendly and use BSL interpreters
* Staff and lecturers need to have deaf awareness training
* The university needs more interpreters

Highland Partners included:

* Highland Council
* NHS Highland
* Highlands & Islands Enterprise
* Scottish Natural Heritage
* High Life Highland
* Police Scotland

Only Highland Council and NHS Highland need to prepare BSL plans however other partners were interested to gain the views of BSL users.

Students from outside the Highlands were able to provide feedback via the online survey.

# **Section 1: Across all our services**

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

By 2024, we will:

*(2) Analyse existing evidence about students and prospective students who use BSL in our college/university; identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress.*

We will do this by:

* Investigating if a declaration box can be added to the enrolment form. This will allow the university to collect data on the number of BSL users it has as students.
* Reviewing how we can improve information we hold about BSL users.

*(3.4) Improve information and services for students and prospective students who use BSL, including making our website more accessible to BSL users.*

We will do this by:

* Consulting with Communication teams across the university for guidance to improve information available to BSL users, including website resources.

*(5) Promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’, which allows BSL users to contact the public and their sector services and for these services to contact them.*

We will do this by:

* Raising awareness of the service via internal newsletters, social media and to senior management.
* Adding a link to ContactScotland on the university website.
* Encouraging staff working with BSL users to include ContactScotland on their email signatures.

*(6) Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training, and enable them to take up such training.*

We will do this by:

* Collating a central list of training providers who offer appropriate BSL/deaf awareness training.
* Promoting upcoming training via newsletters
* Promoting training providers via internal practitioner groups
* Promoting internal BSL training across the partnership
* Working with external partners to promote and deliver training opportunities.

# **Section 2: 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)”***

By 2024, we will

*(25) Take action to ensure that students and prospective students who use BSL are properly supported.*

We will do this by:

* Considering which pre and post entry information should be translated to ensure BSL users know what to expect from college/university
* Encouraging prospective and current students to disclose. This will enable the necessary support to be put in place, including at pre-entry e.g. for attending open days.
* Contacting applicants upon disclosure to discuss the support arrangements they require which may lead to the development of a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP).

*(26) Take on board guidance/advice produced by the SFC and others to ensure that across the institution staff are aware of their responsibilities towards BSL users.*

We will do this by:

* Communicating guidance/advice via internal newsletters, practitioner groups and online.

*Invite regular feedback from students/prospective students and staff who use BSL over the coming year/18 months after adopting this plan*

We will do this by:

* Working with external partners to engage with BSL users to give updates on the BSL plan.

*Commit to reviewing/refreshing this plan and to include more ‘local’ actions (based on feedback) after the national progress report (due October 2020)*

We will do this by:

* The university’s BSL working group meeting once per semester to review the plan and its actions.

*(27) Provide assistance to students who use BSL to help them complete SAAS application forms*

We will do this by:

* Local Student Support teams being available to assist students to complete forms and where appropriate signpost for further guidance.

# **Section 3: Our contribution towards other relevant long-term goals**

## C:\Users\rosemack\Pictures\bsl\family.png**Section 3.1 Action 3: Family Support, Early Education 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”***

By 2024 we will:

*Ensure onsite childcare facilities are accessible and welcoming to parents and children who use BSL.*

We will do this by:

* Communicating with onsite facilities and encourage them to be more accessible for BSL users

## **Section 3.2: School Education**

*****“Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so 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”***

By 2024 we will:

*Support and encourage BSL users leaving school and their parents/guardians to attend college.*

We will do this by:

* Offering pre-enrolment visits and transition meetings to potential students to familiarise themselves with the building
* Working with external partners to develop transition pathways for applicants progressing from high school to college.

## **Section 3.4: 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.”***

By 2024, we will:

*(35) Raise awareness of the UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ scheme for students who use BSL towards the end of their course so that they can benefit from the support it provides when they enter the world of work.*

We will do this by:

* Adding a link to the website on the Disability  Matters webpage
* Raising awareness of this with the Careers and Employability Centre. In turn, they can share information with BSL users who may access their service.

## **Section 3.5: Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing**

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 ***“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”***

By 2024, we will:

*Investigate how the institution can make health/mental health services (including advice and counselling services) within the college/university accessible to students who use BSL.*

We will do this by:

* Working with online counsellors/local AP counsellors for feedback on making these sessions accessible to BSL users

## C:\Users\rosemack\Desktop\BSL language plan\Partnership work\Symbols\bus.png**Section 3.6: Transport**

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

By 2024, we will:

*Consider how the institution can work with local transport providers to ensure that travel information is accessible and well-publicised.*

We will do this by:

* Encouraging campuses to display local travel information in appropriate spaces.

## **Section 3.7: 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”***

By 2024, we will:

*Explore how to make extracurricular/recreational activities offered within the institution are accessible to students who use BSL.*

We will do this by:

* Working with HISA to find solutions to potential barriers to make their activities accessible.

## **Section 3.8: Justice**



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

By 2024, we will:

*The University and its partner colleges will support students who use BSL through disciplinary meetings.*

We will do this by:

* Reviewing current procedures for non-academic and academic misconduct meetings to ensure they can be accessible for BSL users
* Considering how BSL using students going through the criminal justice system can be supported appropriately.

## **Section 3.9: 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”***

By 2024, we will:

*Consider how the Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA) can make their elections and class rep system accessible to ensure BSL users can participate.*

We will do this by:

* Working with HISA to review current procedures and investigate how these can be made accessible for BSL users.