



ARGYLL AND BUTE
COUNCIL

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL'S BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN 2024 - 2030

Introduction

Following the Scottish Government's publication of its National British Sign Language Plan in November 2023, Argyll and Bute Council is producing its own, local British Sign Language plan.

This plan differs from the previous plan for Argyll and Bute in that the previous plan was produced jointly with NHS Highland and Live Argyll. While we will continue to coordinate our activities, the council's 2024-2030 plan has been produced as a single-agency plan. In keeping with this approach, NHS Highland is reporting separately on progress made with its actions from the previous plan; they are not reported here.

Because this plan focuses on the council, the number of actions is reduced compared to the previous plan. We have also worked to keep this realistic within the resources available.

The document is comprised of two parts. The first reports on progress made during the lifetime of our previous plan. The second outlines our goals and objectives for the second plan.

5. We said we would take forward advice developed by Education Scotland to a) improve the way that teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and b) ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can get further involved in their child's education.

Our Education records system does not hold any information about parents; it only holds information about the child. The needs of each child are identified on a case-by-case basis.

6. We said we would 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.

In the early years of the plan, a pilot project was undertaken at one of our schools; seven pupils passed an introduction to British Sign Language course. While the school continued the project in 2019/2020, the project has not been rolled out more widely.

From 2021 every child has been entitled to learn a first additional language from primary one and a second from primary five. This entitlement continues until the end of S3. Although BSL has been

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13. We said we would take opportunities to promote the Access to Elected Office Fund locally, which can meet the additional costs of BSL users wishing to stand for selection or election in local or Scottish Parliament elections.

We provided a link to Access to Elected Office Fund on the Council's elections page on the website and also within guidance document designed to encourage people to stand as a local councillor. This information is also featured during periods of election activity.

Information about Contact Scotland BSL is provided in the Elected Member's section of our intranet.

We will carry over training of electoral staff on accessibility and signposted materials to the new plan.

Lessons learned from the previous plan:

The Joint BSL plan 2018-2024 for Argyll and Bute was approved in 2018. Since then, the environment in which we operate has changed considerably. The upheavals associated with the covid pandemic brought BSL into our living rooms with every First Minister's briefing, raising awareness around the language while also causing some areas of work to be put on hold.

More lastingly, Covid has accelerated changes to the way we work and deliver services, with a move towards remote and hybrid working and the adoption of more digital working.

- A key lesson, then, is the need for any plan to be flexible.

Other lessons include:

- A need to put mechanisms in place to make sure activities are delivered and maintained throughout the life of the plan.
- A need to make sure actions are handed over when there are changes to staff or when there are changes to management arrangements.
- To be realistic about what we can deliver with the resources available.

7. Continue to have Contact Scotland BSL on website.
8. Carry out awareness raising activity, so all council officers and elected members are aware of what this is and how they use the service.
9. Continue to ensure information about Contact Scotland BSL is provided on the elected members' section of the intranet or successor websites.

These actions align with the national Plan goal: To remove accessibility as a barrier for BSL users in all aspects of life, recognising the importance of having accessible information in the right format at the right time, utilising technology and increasing people's awareness of communication tools.

Children, Young People and their Families

Long-term goal: Ensure the needs of deaf or deafblind children and their families are supported.

Actions:

10. Continue to support children to learn in environments that best suit their needs.
11. Offer opportunities to teachers to build on their BSL learning.

These actions align with the national plan goal: The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a deaf or deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL. We will strengthen partnerships between relevant organisations to overcome barriers for BSL users and deaf/deafblind children to ensure they have the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential.

Access to Employment

Long-term goal: Support BSL users to access the labour market.

Actions:

12. Ensure BSL users are signposted to the employability programme which best meets their individual needs.

This action aligns with the national plan goal: BSL users will receive person-centred support to develop their skills, consider what route to employment is right for them and enter into the

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.

Democratic Participation

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