

Midlothian



Midlothian Council

British Sign Language (BSL)

Plan

2024-2030

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SECTION 2: Introduction



This document is the English version of the British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for Midlothian Council 2024-2030. The BSL version is available on the Council website.

The British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years, demonstrating how they will support and promote BSL.

In 2018, Midlothian Council published its first BSL plan. The plan set out the actions the Council would take to provide local BSL users* with equal access to support and services over the years 2018-2024.

This new plan, for the years 2024-2030, reaffirms our ongoing commitment to make Midlothian a more inclusive place for BSL users to live, work, study and visit. It aims to build on the progress of the last six years and also to address additional issues that BSL users have told us are important to them.

The actions contained in this plan align with the long-term goals of the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2023-2029, which were developed in partnership with the BSL community.

This plan was finalised after consultation with BSL users in the Midlothian Council area.

**BSL users' refers to 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.*

SECTION 3: 2018-2024 Progress Update

In 2018, Midlothian Council published its first BSL plan, which set out the actions the Council would take to provide BSL users in Midlothian with equal access to support and services over the years 2018-2024. This plan is available on the Council website in both BSL and English.

Progress has been accomplished in several areas of the first plan, with other actions continued for delivery in the 2024-2030 plan. Key achievements from the first plan include:

- ✓ Highlighting the ContactScotlandBSL video interpreting relay service on the Council website.
- ✓ Reviewing the level of training required by interpreters, support staff and teachers in the education system.
- ✓ Promoting awareness of BSL and training opportunities for D/deaf children and their families from the first diagnosis and throughout their childhood and school years.
- ✓ Requiring interpreters for all face-to-face meetings and events attended by D/deaf parents and carers.
- ✓ Encouraging school pupils to engage with services and activities aimed at supporting their transition to further education, training or employment.

SECTION 4: Executive Summary

The Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2024-2030 is based on the following long-term goals of the BSL National Plan 2023-2029:



BSL Accessibility



Children, Young People and their Families



Access to Employment



Health and Wellbeing



Celebrating BSL Culture



Transport



Democratic Participation

The Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2024-2030 sets out what we will do to support BSL users in Midlothian. The plan covers access to information and services; children, young people and families; training and work; health and wellbeing; culture and the arts; transport; and democracy.

Some of the key actions we will deliver include:

- ① Providing information on key issues of importance to BSL users in BSL on the Council website.
- ① Supporting opportunities for teachers of the deaf and teachers working with D/deaf and Deafblind children and young people to obtain qualifications up to SCQF Level 10.
- ① Signposting employer groups and partners delivering learning and employment services to specific advice on the needs of BSL users.
- ① Supporting the development of opportunities for D/deaf and Deafblind children, young people, and their families, to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL.
- ① Establishing a BSL User Group to engage more effectively with local BSL users.

SECTION 5: Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2024-2030

5.1: BSL Accessibility



Our long-term 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.

We will:

1. Continue to promote the use of ContactScotlandBSL, the national BSL video interpreting relay service, as a key method for contacting the Council.
2. Provide training to staff on using ContactScotlandBSL.
3. Increase D/deaf and BSL awareness training for staff across all services.
4. Support identified public-facing staff to learn BSL.
5. Translate material into BSL following requests from service users.
6. Provide information on key issues of importance to BSL users in BSL on the Council website.

5.2: Children, Young People and their Families



Our long-term goal:

We will ensure that D/deaf and Deafblind children have the support they need at all stages of their learning and development, so that they can reach their full potential.

We will:

7. Provide our early years and education staff with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and resources available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or Deafblind child.
8. Ensure that all schools know how to access and use ContactScotlandBSL.
9. Ensure that fully qualified BSL interpreters are offered for school meetings and events attended by parents or carers who use BSL.
10. Use the 'British Sign Language (BSL) Toolkit for Practitioners' and other resources developed by Education Scotland to help teachers engage more effectively with parents and carers who use BSL.
11. Signpost pupils and students to information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career, learning choices and transition to training or employment.
12. Support opportunities for teachers and early years practitioners to learn BSL up to the level of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6.
13. Investigate opportunities for teachers of the deaf and teachers working with D/deaf and Deafblind children and young people to obtain further qualifications in BSL.
14. Investigate opportunities for funding BSL tuition for families of D/deaf and Deafblind children and young people.

5.3: Access to Employment



Our long-term 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 Midlothian's economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career.

We will:

- 15.** Provide our employability staff and volunteers with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and resources available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of individual BSL users and their family members.
- 16.** Raise awareness of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme with BSL users and employers.
- 17.** Signpost employer groups and partners delivering learning and employment services to specific advice on the needs of BSL users.
- 18.** Support BSL users to access volunteering opportunities with local organisations.

5.4: Health and Wellbeing



Our long-term goal:

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.

We will:

19. Signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL.
20. Continue to ensure that any work we undertake locally to tackle social isolation includes the needs of BSL users.
21. Increase the provision of information about sport and physical activity opportunities for BSL users.

5.5: Celebrating BSL Culture



Our long-term goal:

BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Midlothian, and equal opportunities to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf culture with the people of Midlothian.

We will:

22. Help BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals through the use of qualified BSL interpreters, volunteers trained in BSL, and signed video.
23. Support the development of opportunities for D/deaf and Deafblind children, young people, and their families, to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL.

5.6: Transport



Our long-term goal:

BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support transport use.

We will:

24. Support Transport Scotland initiatives to deliver practical solutions to make travel more accessible for BSL users.

5.7: Democratic Participation



Our long-term goal:

BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies.

We will:

25. Promote the Access to Elected Office Fund, which can meet the additional costs of BSL users wishing to stand for selection or election in local or Scottish Parliament elections.
26. Establish a BSL User Group to engage more effectively with local BSL users.

SECTION 6: Monitoring and Reporting

We will publish a progress update on the actions above in 2027, the midway point for this plan. This will enable us to assess our performance and reflect on any work that remains to be done to meet our long-term goals and overall vision for BSL users in the Midlothian Council area.

Midlothian Council will also contribute to the Scottish Government's national BSL progress report in 2026.

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BSL users can contact the Council via [Contact Scotland BSL](#)



Contact us via an online
Sign Language Interpreter
Contact Scotland BSL