

Midlothian Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018 - 2024**Report by: Dr Grace Vickers, Chief Executive****1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to present a draft British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018 -2024 to Council.

2. Background

- 2.1** The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 received Royal Assent on 22 October 2015. This legislation sets out ambitious plans to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit. The Scottish Government published the National British Sign Language (BSL) Plan in October 2017.
- 2.2** The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires that all 'listed Authorities', (of which Midlothian Council is one), in Scotland must produce an Authority Plan (local plan) demonstrating how they will work towards implementing the national plan and improving services for BSL users throughout the area.
- 2.3** Midlothian Council is required to consult on a draft plan and those to be consulted are to be those who the authority considers are likely to be directly affected by the Authority Plan or otherwise to have an interest in that plan and in particular are to include:
 - (a) persons who use BSL, and
 - (b) persons who represent users of BSL.
- 2.4** The Council is required to produce a BSL and English version of both the draft and final plan. The ring-fenced budget allocated by the Scottish Government assists with this and the delivery of actions contained within the final plan.
- 2.5** In February 2018 Midlothian Council in partnership with East Lothian Council, West Lothian Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service held an engagement/consultation event and listened/heard through interpreters and in person the views and needs of the Deaf and Deafblind communities Lothian-wide. This was followed up in October 2018 with a joint Midlothian and East Lothian Council specific consultation event. This involved council officers and included residents who use BSL telling tell us what they would like in the plan.

- 2.6** Based on the consultation events held and the feedback received a draft plan was produced and published for consultation on the Council website from October to November 2018. The report presented today meets the legal requirements of the Equality legislation and supports a positive way forward for the Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board.
- 2.7** The draft BSL Local Plan 2018 – 2024 for Midlothian Council, which is attached as an Appendix to this report, follows the format of the National Plan and sets out an ambitious suite of actions which will improve the way BSL users find out about and access Council services.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

Ring-fenced funding from the Scottish Government of £11,000 has been allocated to Midlothian Council to assist with the development of the BSL Plan. An additional £5,000 per annum will be allocated to the Council during the life of this Plan to assist with the ongoing implementation of the BSL Plan.

3.2 Risk

The Council has a duty to comply with the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Midlothian Council and its Community Planning Partners have made a commitment to treat the following areas as key priorities under the Single Midlothian Plan:

- Reducing inequalities in learning outcomes
- Reducing inequalities in health outcomes
- Reducing inequalities in economic circumstance

BSL is an equality issue. Equality, diversity and human rights underpin all three priorities.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Completion of actions and the meeting of outcomes within this report will enhance equality, diversity and human rights performance and outcomes.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

By adopting a pro-active approach to equality, diversity and human rights a preventative approach will be engendered.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The plan was available in BSL format on the Council's website and feedback sought over a period of weeks. Development of the plan has also been informed by a joint consultation event with East Lothian Council, West Lothian Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service who together held an engagement/consultation event and listened/heard through interpreters and in person the views and needs of the Deaf and Deafblind communities Lothian-wide.

This was followed up in October 2018 with a joint Midlothian and East Lothian Council specific consultation event. This involved council officers and included residents who use BSL telling tell us what they would like in the plan. Sign interpreters and note takers were provided to make this a totally inclusive event.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed with regards to the Draft Plan.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The content of this report contributes to a sustainable approach to the continuous improvement of equality, diversity and human rights within Midlothian Council and its communities.

3.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

4 Summary

The Council recognises the need to deliver services that meet the needs of the diverse communities of Midlothian whilst ensuring legislative compliance. In consultation with BSL users and the deaf community of Midlothian a local plan has been developed that will support progress towards making Midlothian the best place for BSL users and the deaf community to live, work and visit.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that Council approve the content of the draft BSL Local Plan 2018 – 2024 for Midlothian Council.

Appendices:	Midlothian Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018 - 2024
Date:	28 May 2019
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Background Papers:	None