

Midlothian Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-2030

Report by Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

Council is asked to approve the Midlothian Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-2030.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to present to Council the Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2024-2030, which describes the actions the Council will take to promote the use and understanding of BSL throughout the Midlothian area, and to provide local BSL users with equal access to support and services over the next six years.

Date: 9 April 2024

Report Contact:

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3 Background/Main Body of Report

- 3.1 The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 17 September 2015 and obtained Royal Assent on 22 October 2015. The Act aims to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work, study and visit.
- 3.2 Every six years, the Scottish Government publishes a national plan setting out its priorities and actions for ensuring that BSL users enjoy equal access, opportunity, representation and inclusion.
- 3.3 Listed authorities (such as Midlothian Council) are required to develop their own plans, consistent with the aims of the most recent national plan and reflective of local needs and circumstances. In 2018, Midlothian Council published the Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2018-2024, which shared the long-term goals of the BSL National Plan 2017-2023.
- 3.4 In November 2023, the Scottish Government published its second national plan, the BSL National Plan 2023-2029. Listed authorities were given six months to create their second local BSL plans and publish final versions in both BSL and English.
- 3.5 Listed authorities must consult with BSL users and their representatives during the development of their plans. In March 2024, Midlothian Council and the British Deaf Association held a public engagement event in Dalkeith where members of the local BSL community provided their feedback on a draft version of the plan presented in this report. In response to their input, several actions were revised and added to ensure that the plan reflects the expressed wishes of BSL users in the Midlothian Council area.
- 3.6 In compliance with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, this plan will also be published in BSL. The BSL version of the 2018-2024 plan is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 3.7 According to the 2011 Scottish census, 233 people in Midlothian Council area used BSL at home. More recent figures will be available when the relevant data from the 2022 census is released.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

The Scottish Government has allocated no additional funding to support the delivery of local BSL plans.

4.2 Digital

There are no digital issues arising from this report.

4.3 Risk

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

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed for this report.

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background information/Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

‘Individuals and communities have improved health and skills for learning, life and work’

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

This report is not directly relevant to delivering best value.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Development of the Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2024-2030 was informed by consultation with members of the local BSL community at a public event in Dalkeith on 22 March 2024. The event was attended by Midlothian residents who use BSL and their families, Officers from a range of Council services, and representatives of NHS Lothian and the British Deaf Association. Communication support was provided by fully qualified and accredited BSL interpreters.

Key issues raised at the event included improving the level of BSL provision for school pupils and their families, increasing training and awareness raising for staff in public-facing roles, and providing information and guidance on important topics in BSL on the Council website. The draft plan was consequently adapted to more fully incorporate the concerns of the BSL community in Midlothian.

A BSL User Group, composed of local BSL users, will be established to ensure consistent community engagement throughout the duration of the plan.

Relevant Council services were consulted on actions within their areas over March and April 2024. Support will continue to be offered to these services to promote a cooperative and collaborative approach to implementing the plan.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Delivery of the plan will improve performance and outcomes related to equality, diversity and human rights.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The actions contained in the plan constitute a proactive, preventative approach to equality, diversity and human rights.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

This report is not directly relevant to supporting sustainable development.

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource Links

[Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2018-2024 \[BSL Version\]](#)

[Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2018-2024 \[English Version\]](#)

[BSL National Plan 2023-2029](#)