

West Dunbartonshire Council

**British Sign Language Plan
2024-30**



Foreword

I am delighted to bring forward the Council's new British Sign Language (BSL) Plan, which sets out our commitments and planned actions over the next six years to ensure BSL users are supported to be active and engaged in public life.

When looking forward to what we want to achieve, it is only natural to also look back at the progress already made in our area.

As well as establishing a BSL user engagement group, we have introduced a range of BSL videos to support users with accessing key Council services, making it easier for them to take action around reporting a repair, applying for housing and accessing leisure.

In the period 2024-2030, our focus will remain on enhanced access for BSL users, with commitments including celebrating BSL culture; supporting children, young people and their families; improving health and wellbeing, accessing transport and more.

I'm very proud of what we have achieved so far and our vision for the future, and as chair of the Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group I will ensure there are continued improvements to how we deliver services to BSL users in West Dunbartonshire.



Councillor June McKay
Chair of the West Dunbartonshire Council
Equality & Diversity Working Group

Introduction

We are delighted to present our BSL Action Plan for 2024-2030. We want BSL users (those individuals whose first or preferred language is BSL) to be fully involved in daily and public life as active, healthy citizens who have access to information which allows them to make informed choices.

As a Council, we are committed to doing all we can to make this possible and we will continue to build on the achievements and progress made so far. This includes:

- Developing a range of BSL videos on key services provided by the Council such as reporting a repair, applying for housing, council tax, accessing leisure & sport; as well public health information during the pandemic
- Carrying out Deaf awareness training and sign posting employees to online learning modules; and
- Establishing a BSL user engagement group, which will have regular meetings on a wide range of topics relating to living in West Dunbartonshire

Census data from 2011 indicated there were 201 people using BSL in West Dunbartonshire, with 50 being Deaf people. When developing this plan, we liaised with BSL users, and British Deaf Association Scotland to ensure the needs of D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users are properly reflected. The Plan sets out actions we will take over the period 2024 – 2030 and focuses on what we can deliver in West Dunbartonshire in line with the long-term goals of the Scottish Government National Plan 2023-2029, West Dunbartonshire Plan for Place 2017-2027 and the Council Strategic Plan 2022-2027. It aligns with our Equality Outcomes and Mainstream Report for 2021-2025.

Throughout the plan, we refer to 'BSL users', which covers all people whose first or preferred language BSL is, including those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss. BSL is a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

Monitoring progress

The progress of this plan will be monitored and managed by the Equality & Diversity Working Group (EDWG) and reported to Corporate Services committee within wider equality monitoring progress reporting.

Delivering the West Dunbartonshire BSL Plan 2024-2030

The West Dunbartonshire 2024-2030 BSL Plan shares the long-term goals as set out in the National Plan and has adopted following key priority areas:

1. Accessible information

For the many Deaf people and other BSL users, BSL is their first language. The Council recognises key information should be provided in BSL, enabling people to access services using their own language. To achieve this, the Council must increase the amount of BSL information it makes available.

This can be achieved through a wide variety of actions, and this plan focuses on ensuring that BSL users' lived experience is actively informing how Council services are delivered.

Our commitments:

- We will produce an online learning course on Providing Accessible Services for all West Dunbartonshire Council employees.
- We will increase accessibility of our website and social media channels.
- We will train staff to use online interpreting video relay services (such as contact Scotland-BSL) and explore the potential for greater use.
- Face to face contact is important to BSL users and we will work to ensure that such face-to-face contact is supported by good communication practice.
- We will respond promptly to requests from BSL users to arrange BSL/English interpreting when required for access to our services.
- We will put in place a dedicated mobile text service to let BSL users contact the Council's Contact Centre in this way.

2. Children, Young People and their Families

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is a commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time. This ensures every child and young person in West Dunbartonshire can reach their full potential.

In working towards this commitment, the Council recognises the need to develop a clear pathway for D/deaf and deafblind children, promoting the use of BSL at each stage of their education journey in order to maximise their potential at school and ensuring they have support to engage with BSL. Parents/carers who use BSL will have equal opportunities to be fully involved in their child's education.

Our commitments:

- We will continue to ensure we have the structures and processes in place to support BSL users in educational settings.
- Family learning inclusive of the needs of D/deaf children and or parents/carers including BSL users will be supported.

3. Supporting access to Employment

No One Left Behind is the Council's approach to employability support for all ages in West Dunbartonshire. Support is available to all who need it, though it is aimed at supporting those further from the labour market.

Our commitments:

- We will ensure our policies of promoting diversity in the workplace are widely disseminated among BSL users.
- We will ensure support to BSL users seeking employment and training support is delivered to meet the BSL users' needs.
- We will promote and support Foundation apprenticeships for BSL in partnership with Community Planning partners.

4. Health and Wellbeing

Advancing health and wellbeing is a key focus of the Council's 22-27 Strategic Plan and requires a commitment to joint working with community planning partners, and dialogue with D/deaf people locally.

Our commitments:

- We will work with partners through West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust (WDLT) to support D/deaf people to get and stay active, ensuring physical activity and sport facilities are high-quality and accessible.
- We will ensure work on inclusion including countering loneliness and isolation is inclusive of the needs of D/deaf people in West Dunbartonshire. This is in line with the approach detailed in the Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland Strategy.
- We will take account of how access to and design of our services is linked to health and wellbeing. We will work with Community Planning partners and consult with D/deaf people to identify and use best practice.

5. Celebrating BSL Culture

Culture can improve the life chances of all people at every stage in their life. In Scotland, culture can be an important element to help reduce poverty and mitigate its impacts.

Our commitments:

- We will encourage opportunities for cultural exchange between D/deaf and hearing people.
- We will encourage development of BSL accessible events and increased information on cultural opportunities.
- We will share information about BSL culture and continue to ensure that it is considered in the Council's work.

6. BSL Data

We recognise that there has been extensive work within academia and the third sector to build up evidence and data around BSL users, D/deaf and deafblind people, which is essential for informing public policy and shaping services to meet needs.

Our commitments:

- We will continue to improve engagement with BSL users through regular meetings of the BSL Equality Forum.
- We will ensure that the data we gather informs our practice in terms of D/deaf people's needs, including communication needs.

7. Access to Transport

Transport Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework for Scotland focuses on supporting disabled people's rights by removing barriers and improving access to travel.

Our commitments:

- We will promote the use of National Entitlement Cards and ensure the application process supports BSL user's needs.
- We will ensure that the needs of D/deaf people are reflected in the Council's work on transport, for example on active and sustainable travel, which is in line with our wider commitment to equality.

8. Democratic Participation and Community Empowerment

The Christie Commission principles – a focus on people, performance, partnership and the prevention of harm – continue to shape the Public Service Reform agenda in Scotland. At the heart of this is the recognition that no single person or organisation can achieve transformational change alone, and that people should be involved in and able to influence the decisions affecting them.

Engagement with all communities across West Dunbartonshire supports all types of participation as outlined in the [BSL video about the West Dunbartonshire Community Empowerment Strategy](#).

Our commitments:

- We will work with partner organisations including the Valuation Joint Board in areas such as increasing voter registration.
- Ahead of every election we will review arrangements for BSL users and incorporate best practice.
- We will develop links with BSL user groups and adopt best practice guidelines. This will include advice on how to involve BSL users in the design and delivery of our services.
- We will work to support the digital inclusion of D/deaf people.

Publication

This plan is published in BSL and English on the [Council's Equality pages](#).

This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format on request.

Gaelic

Tha an sgrìobhainn seo cuideachd ri fhaighinn ann an cànanan eile, ann an clò mòr, agus ann an cruth claisneachd ma thèid iarraidh

Arabic

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.

Hindi

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

Urdu

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Chinese (Cantonese)

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Polish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formie audio.

Ukrainian

Цей документ також доступний іншими мовами, великим шрифтом та в аудіоформаті за запитом.

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