

British Sign Language Plan 2024 – 2030

1. Introduction

The University of Glasgow is committed to promoting equality in all its activities and aims to provide an inclusive and enriching work, learning, research, and teaching environment free from discrimination and unfair treatment.

As a public authority, the University is committed to ensuring we give due regard to the three duties of the Equality Act 2010; the opportunity to develop and implement our British Sign Language (BSL) Plan allows us to address the specific requirements of BSL/deaf community.

The University recognises BSL is a language in its own right, with all the creative nuances of dialect, grammar, syntax and vocabulary. The University recognises people who have BSL as their native language, contribute to the communities and culture they live within.

Throughout the plan, we refer to 'BSL users'. This covers all people whose first or preferred language is BSL, including those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss.

The University's first BSL Action Plan 2018 – 2024 was expansive and broad-ranging. Overall, good progress has been made in its implementation. There has been particularly positive and strong engagement with activities to improve BSL awareness across our UofG community, with delivery of BSL Taster sessions as well as more detailed BSL tuition with key service areas, including: People and Organisational Development, University Sport, External Relations and colleagues in Facilities and Security within the Estates directorate. We have improved our data capture mechanisms, which will support evidence-based decision making and equality impact assessments.

Many of our actions are complete and embedded. Several of them continue as part of ongoing and best practice activity in our new BSL Action Plan 2024 – 2030. Others have had more limited progress, for various reasons and, not least, due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. We prioritise these actions in this next iteration of our BSL Action Plan 2024 – 2030, as reflected in timescales for completion.

2. Engagement and Governance

The University recognises the BSL Plan is a living document. Continued engagement with BSL users and data forms part of the implementation of the BSL Plan. Following the Scottish Government's guidance and approach, we will review and report progress within the first three years of the BSL Plan. This will align with our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and mainstreaming reporting in 2027, which we will publish in BSL format.

The 17 high-level Actions set out here will be delivered through a more detailed operational action plan. Progress made in implementing the plan will be reported to the University's Disability Equality Group and the Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee, in line with the University's other legislative reporting schedules (i.e. PSED Reporting).

The University commits to ensuring that we are responsive to ongoing engagement and feedback on the BSL Plan, updating it as appropriate. In line with the National BSL Plan, the University undertakes to ensure any revisions to the published version of the BSL Action Plan 2024 – 2030 are made available in BSL format.

3. Action Plan

In devising our BSL Plan, we have aligned our priorities with the Scottish Government's National BSL Plan 2023 – 2029 ('the National Plan'), identifying the goals, and setting local actions for those which are most relevant to the Higher Education context.

We have identified six National Plan areas to which we align our actions and goals to embed BSL at the University of Glasgow. These are:

Priority 2. BSL Accessibility

Priority 3. Children, Young People and their Families

Priority 4. Access to Employment

Priority 5. Health and Wellbeing

Priority 6. Celebrating BSL Culture

Priority 7. BSL Data

Actions devised under each of these priority areas are outlined below.

Priority 2. BSL Accessibility

The University shares the Scottish Government's long-term goal to improve BSL Accessibility highlighted in the National Plan:

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.

In support of this long-term goal, by 2030, we will:

1. Improve information on our website for BSL users, aimed at potential students. In particular, we will ensure that key marketing and student recruitment material are translated into BSL.
2. Continue to promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services, 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL' to colleagues and to local BSL users.
3. Create a short information film for student BSL users explaining the Needs Assessment Process coordinated through the Student Disability Service.
4. Continue to raise awareness of BSL use through provision of BSL Taster Sessions for staff and subsidised BSL Short Courses.

Priority 3. Children, Young People and their Families

The University shares the Scottish Government's long-term goal, outlined in the National Plan, to ensure that:

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.

In support of this long-term goal, by 2030, we will:

1. Embed the requirement to support BSL in early year's provision at the University nursery.
2. Enhance BSL user awareness in School of Education programmes relating to Early Years and Initial Teacher education.

Priority 4. Access to Employment

The University shares the Scottish Government's long-term goal detailed in the National Plan to make sure that:

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.

In support of this long-term goal, by 2030, we will:

1. Ensure student BSL users have equitable access to opportunities and support to develop appropriate Graduate Attributes to facilitate transition into the graduate workforce and their chosen career.
2. Review key recruitment material/videos for translation into BSL format and consider profiling the BSL user employee experience at the University, where possible.

Priority 5. Health and Wellbeing

The University shares the Scottish Government's long-term goal highlighted in the National Plan to ensure:

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.

In support of this long-term goal, by 2030, we will:

1. Continue to ensure BSL user colleagues and students have appropriate access to University Sport facilities.
2. Scope provision of peer-support opportunities for BSL using students to assist with social support internally and working in partnership with other HE providers across Glasgow.
3. Continue to provide support through external BSL therapist to ensure BSL user students can access Counselling and Psychological Services (CaPS) with appropriate support.

Priority 6. Celebrating BSL Culture

The University shares the Scottish Government's long-term goal embedded in the National Plan to ensure:

BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, 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 Scotland.

In support of this long-term goal, by 2030, we will:

1. Continue to review the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery programme, website and exhibits to identify opportunities for BSL interpreted information and events, as well as embedding BSL captioning, where possible.
2. Identify Public Lecture Series or Public Engagement activities at the University where BSL interpretation could be provided during at least one event per year and promote this within the deaf community.
3. Role model BSL user students through profiles which celebrate their experiences and contributions as part of the University of Glasgow community.
4. Identify cultural events and series at the University in which to embed celebrations of deaf culture and raise awareness of BSL to colleagues and students.

Priority 7. BSL Data

The University shares the Scottish Government's long-term goal outlined in the National Plan:

To strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community in Scotland to better inform decision making in public policy and service design.

In support of this long-term goal, by 2030, we will:

1. Review the BSL Action Plan 2024 – 2030 in light of internal and external data and national evidence about BSL community and user experience, biennially, reflecting the Scottish Government's progress reporting intentions outlined in the National Plan.
2. Continue to improve data collection on BSL users across our campuses to support evidence-based reviews of services, processes and decision-making.