

# A Shared British Sign Language Plan for Lanarkshire

2024-2030



# Contents

Foreword ..... 3

Executive Summary ..... 4

Introduction ..... 5

About Us ..... 6

BSL Support in Lanarkshire ..... 7

Rationale for a Shared Plan ..... 8

Developing the Plan - consultation and engagement ..... 9

Next Steps ..... 10

**Our long-term goals**

1. Delivering the Lanarkshire BSL Local Plan 2024-2030 ..... 12

2. BSL Accessibility ..... 13

3. Children, Young People and their Families ..... 14

4. Access to Employment ..... 16

5. Health and Wellbeing ..... 17

6. Celebrating BSL Culture ..... 18

7. BSL Data ..... 19

8. Transport ..... 20

9. Access to Justice ..... 21

10. Democratic Participation ..... 22

# Foreword

We are delighted to present the second British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for Lanarkshire.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 continues to provide opportunities to:

- ◆ show our continuing commitment to protecting and supporting BSL including in its tactile form
- ◆ recognise and value BSL as a language in its own right; and
- ◆ ensure the needs of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users are brought into the mainstream in our organisations

The Plan aims to make Lanarkshire a place where people, whose first or preferred language is BSL, have the same opportunities to be active healthy citizens and are able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

We want to thank the Deaf and Deafblind BSL representatives who worked with us for their valued support in the development of this Plan.



NHS Lanarkshire Chair:  
**Martin Hill**



NLC Leader of the Council:  
**Cllr Jim Logue**



SLC Leader of the Council:  
**Cllr Joe Fagan**



NHS Lanarkshire  
Chief Executive:  
**Professor Jann Gardner**



NLC Chief Executive:  
**Des Murray**



SLC Chief Executive:  
**Paul Manning**

# Executive Summary

This is the second shared BSL Local Plan for Lanarkshire covering the work of NHS Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council. It was co-produced in partnership with the Deaf and Deafblind BSL communities of Lanarkshire -Deaf Services Lanarkshire, Deafblind Scotland, D.E.A.F. South Lanarkshire and Lanarkshire Deaf Club.

The Plan mirrors the National BSL Plan which aims to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL signers to live, learn, work and visit. This local plan has those same aspirations for Lanarkshire and aims to both improve: the use of and understanding of British Sign Language in Lanarkshire; and the lives of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users living in Lanarkshire.

## **The plan for Lanarkshire sets out actions around ten priority areas:**

1. Delivering the Lanarkshire BSL Local Plan 2024-2030
2. BSL Accessibility
3. Children, Young People and their Families
4. Access to Employment
5. Health and Wellbeing
6. Celebrating BSL Culture
7. BSL Data
8. Transport
9. Access to Justice
10. Democratic Participation

# Introduction

The BSL National Plan 2023 - 2029 was published by the Scottish Government on 6 November 2023. Within this plan there are ten priority areas with an emphasis on the following: children, young people and their families; health and wellbeing; celebrating deaf culture; and tackling accessibility for BSL users that impacts on a number of areas such as transport, democratic participation and access to justice.

The focus of the National Plan over the next six years will be to deliver actions that will lead to improved equality, opportunities and outcomes for BSL users.

This Shared BSL Plan for Lanarkshire reflects those same priorities and sets out our long term goals and the actions we will take from 2024 – 2030.



# About Us

## Lanarkshire

Situated in the heart of Scotland, Lanarkshire has the second largest populated region in Scotland with a working age population of 425,000 (and total population of 652,300) over 896 square miles. Scattered in a diverse mixture of urban, rural and isolated settlements it covers urban towns including Motherwell, Hamilton, Airdrie, Rutherglen, the new town of East Kilbride and the market town of Lanark, as well as smaller towns, villages and agricultural areas.

Ongoing social and economic changes in Lanarkshire have resulted in an ever-changing environment. Modern business ventures and increasing employment opportunities are replacing traditional heavy industries.

## NHS Lanarkshire

NHS Lanarkshire is responsible for improving the health of more than 654,490 people living within the North and South Lanarkshire local authority areas.

There are three university hospitals in the area – Hairmyres, Monklands and Wishaw. Primary health care is provided in the community and includes general practitioners (GPs), dentists, health visitors and a wide range of health professionals. NHS Lanarkshire's primary care facilities include health centres and community and day hospitals.

## North Lanarkshire Council

North Lanarkshire is Scotland's fourth largest council covering around 181 square miles. Stretching from Stepps to Harthill the area has eight main towns interspersed with many villages and hamlets.

With a population of around 340,000, our people and communities are diverse.

According to the last census in 2011 there were 848 active British Sign Language users living in North Lanarkshire. The most recent census results are awaited, and this plan will be updated when available.

## South Lanarkshire Council

South Lanarkshire is the fifth largest council area in Scotland with a population of 320,000, a working age population of 203,000 and around 145,000 households. It is a varied area, with heavily populated towns and extensive rural areas.

According to the last census in 2011 there were 722 people living in South Lanarkshire using BSL at home. The most recent census results are awaited, and this plan will be updated when available.

# British Sign Language support in Lanarkshire

Across our organisations we provide BSL interpretation to anyone who requires support when accessing our services or attending meetings and appointments.

In addition we aim to raise awareness for all of our employees and provide access to a number of learning opportunities including:

- ◆ BSL training
- ◆ Sensory Impairment training and
- ◆ Deaf Culture etc.



# Rationale for a Shared BSL Plan

As with the first Local BSL Plan for Lanarkshire, producing our second plan, as a shared one, was once again viewed by all BSL member organisations as the best approach.

In Lanarkshire the Deaf and Deafblind BSL community is small and closely linked through their shared language and culture. They go to the same clubs and social events across Lanarkshire. There are no borders.

For both council's and the NHS there is already a strong commitment to partnership working, and developing a shared plan has many benefits:

- ♦ having the support and expertise of BSL users when engaging with the wider BSL community
- ♦ reducing consultation fatigue as we would be consulting with the same people
- ♦ maximising the availability of BSL interpreters and Deafblind guide communicators as this is a finite resource;
- ♦ sharing experiences across authorities to promote best practice; and most importantly
- ♦ putting in place a BSL Plan, co-produced with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users, ensuring it is meaningful and accessible.



# Developing the Plan - consultation and engagement

Our Plan was produced in a partnership between the Deaf and Deafblind BSL user led organisations of Lanarkshire and NHS Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council via Lanarkshire BSL Steering Group. This group has continued to be the driving force for monitoring and delivering the ambitions of the first local plan since 2018.

As a first step the BSL Steering Group considered the new National Plan and how its priorities and long-term goals could be aligned within our local context. To do this it held a one-day workshop to consider:

- ◆ Our priorities and long-term goals
- ◆ Actions which required to be carried over from our first Local Plan; and
- ◆ New actions needed in relation to the new priorities.

Once this exercise was complete a first draft of the new plan was developed. The Lanarkshire BSL Steering Group again met in March 2024 where the draft Plan was agreed as ready for consultation with the wider community.

A programme of consultation and engagement was then developed which included:

- ◆ the draft Plan being uploaded onto our websites in BSL and in English along with an on-line questionnaire and people were invited to comment.
- ◆ hosting a face to face event with the BSL community to discuss the Shared Plan; and
- ◆ within our own organisations seeking the views of services who would have a part to play in ensuring the Plan is progressed.

Feedback was then used to prepare this Second Shared BSL Plan for Lanarkshire

# Next Steps

As our Shared BSL Plan for Lanarkshire is a high level plan, a first step for the public body partners is to produce its own working action plan, pertinent to its own organisation, ensuring accountability and compliance with the requirements of the Act.

Furthermore the implementation of the Plan will be the subject of regular reports to our respective Council Elected and NHS Board Members.

Critically, ensuring the BSL Plan is making a difference to the lives of BSL users in Lanarkshire requires the ongoing involvement of the BSL community. The BSL Steering group will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the impact the Plan is having on the lives of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and that the long-term goals are realised.



# Our long-term goals and what we will do by 2030



Delivering the Lanarkshire  
BSL Local Plan 2024-2030



Celebrating BSL Culture



BSL Accessibility



BSL Data



Children, Young People  
and their Families



Transport



Access to Employment



Access to Justice



Health and Wellbeing



Democratic Participation

# Priority 1

# Delivering the Lanarkshire BSL Local Plan 2024-2030



The Lanarkshire BSL Local Plan will span six years. We are committed to the actions within it, starting from the time of publication by creating the right conditions required to facilitate the discussions, learning and sharing of knowledge required to improve outcomes for BSL users in Lanarkshire.

## Our long term goal:

To improve outcomes for BSL users by embedding BSL in our policies, plans and strategies to develop solutions to the barriers faced by BSL users in their daily lives.

## We will:

1. Continue in partnership with Deaf and Deaf blind representative organisations operating in Lanarkshire to help us deliver the actions within this plan and make the cross-cutting connections required to progress BSL equality in Lanarkshire.

This plan will not be static, the ambitions set out within it requires flexibility and leadership to respond to opportunities and challenges. Collaborative working will help us achieve this aim.

2. Ensure consideration of the needs of BSL users are integrated into our equality impact assessment processes.
3. Consider guidance on BSL access for public engagement when published by Scottish Government.



# Priority 2

## BSL Accessibility



For many BSL users, BSL is their first language. We recognise that for public services to be truly accessible for BSL users, there should be awareness around the culture of BSL, providing vital information in BSL, and enabling people to access services using their own language.

### **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. Improve accessibility of our websites for BSL users by:
  - ◆ Including signed videos to provide information about available services
  - ◆ Reviewing guidance on accessing interpretation and translation
  - ◆ Increasing staff awareness, knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture, language and service provision issues; and
  - ◆ Working with local Deaf organisations to develop a programme of training and awareness raising for front-line staff.
  - ◆ Explore the potential to mirror the Scottish Government's Citizen Space locally
2. Ensure BSL users can access information in a variety of ways including face to face, leaflets, social media etc and explore the use of QR codes and link with BSL user organisations
3. Ensure that BSL users are included in Lanarkshire's See Hear strategy as part of the wider group of deaf people, with a focus on living a good life.
4. Promote the use of Contact Scotland BSL, Scotland's BSL online interpreting Video Relay Service, throughout our organisation, making improvements to this service to ensure it meets the needs of BSL users.

# Priority 3

## Children, young people and their families



Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is our commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time. We recognise the need to develop a clear pathway for deaf and deafblind children that helps promote the use of BSL at each stage in their education journey helping to maximise their potential at school, ensuring they have the right support to engage with BSL. Parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child's education.

### Our long-term goal:

The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a D/deaf or Deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL.

### We will:

#### In Health

1. Roll out training and awareness raising for maternity services.
2. Create a directory of services and community-based support for parents to ensure support can be accessed as early as possible at each stage of a child's journey.
3. Consider how we can effectively implement Deaf role model support.



## In Early Years and school education

1. Provide Early Year's staff and childcare workers with access to training and awareness raising of Deaf and Deafblind BSL.
2. Ensure children learn in an environment that best suits their needs and are supported through appropriate GIRFme pathway in North Lanarkshire and their ASP - Additional Support Plan in South Lanarkshire.
3. Ensure communication used is appropriate to child – i.e. not Makaton or other type which are learning support needs.
4. Ensure Deaf parents have access to information in BSL. This includes report cards, parent evenings, routine information, IT Apps, etc.
5. Consider accessibility of school trips, parent councils, work placements and day to day information.
6. Take account of any new guidance for teachers or support staff working with pupils who use BSL.
7. Review training and qualification needs of teachers working with Deaf and Deafblind pupils in mainstream settings, linking in with local Hearing Impaired Services
8. Share the Education Scotland BSL toolkit for practitioners who work with deaf children, young people and their families, parents and carers who use British Sign Language (BSL) and Tactile BSL in education. Share any resources from partner agencies such as SCILT regarding BSL delivery.
9. Support opportunities for teachers of the deaf and teachers working with deaf and deafblind children and young people in obtaining qualifications for instance Deaf Teachers Charter from Moray House. Promote the culture of BSL within schools as part of 1+2 languages by working in partnership with communities.

# Priority 4

## Access to Employment



We aim to build an employability system that tackles inequalities in Lanarkshire's labour market by creating a more responsive, joined up and aligned employability system that meets the needs of employers and the local labour market helping support people on their journey towards, into and within employment.

This complements our approach to Fair Work that is underpinned by the principles of equity and equality of opportunity for all.

### **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 the workforce so that they can fulfil their potential, and improve Lanarkshire's economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career.

### **We will:**

1. Through No One Left Behind, deliver place-based employability services which support individuals to overcome structural barriers to entering and sustaining employment.
2. Use guidance when available from the Scottish Government on solutions to specific barriers for BSL users accessing devolved employability support.
3. Work with local employment services to help highlight specific advice and guidance required by BSL users.





# Priority 5

## Health and wellbeing



Under the law, patients who are BSL users are entitled to the same health and social care access as their hearing peers, in their first or preferred language. NHS Lanarkshire is committed to providing high-quality healthcare services that are person-centred, safe and effective. Good communication is a vital component in delivering high-quality healthcare and in enabling equitable and inclusive access to services and health information.

### 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:

1. Signpost BSL users to health and social care information available in BSL (to be produced by NHS Health Scotland and NHS24).
2. Work with Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership, third sector partners and the Lanarkshire BSL community to develop appropriate information in appropriate formats, signed information on the internet, provision of easy read information etc.
  - ◆ Raise awareness of 'alert' systems across services, for example Public health teams multi-disciplinary 'disaster' responses
  - ◆ Community alerts
  - ◆ Contacting emergency services - 999 App
3. Provide Public Protection information in BSL.
4. Raise awareness mental of health support available across the range of partner organisations.
5. Improve access to information about active health provision, local sports facilities and sporting opportunities.

# Priority 6

## Celebrating BSL culture



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

### **Our long-term goal:**

BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Lanarkshire, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the Arts and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Lanarkshire.

### **We will:**

1. Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals.
2. Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on our websites and at venues
3. Improve access to the historical environment, cultural events and performing arts and film for BSL users.

Work in partnership with providers of cultural events and activities across Lanarkshire to increase availability of signed performances and enhance individuals' access to engagement in cultural activities.

Explore the use of technology to enhance the experience of BSL users when visiting exhibitions or accessing museum collections.



# Priority 7

## BSL Data



Building up evidence and data around BSL users, deaf and deafblind people is essential for informing public policy and shaping services to meet people's needs.

### Our long-term goal:

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

### We will:

1. Include a question in our equalities questionnaires/monitoring forms in relation to the use and understanding of BSL.

### Example question To what extent can you use British Sign Language (BSL)?

- Use BSL .....
- Understand BSL .....
- None of these .....



# Priority 8

# Transport



We know not all BSL users identify themselves as disabled but like disabled people, access to, and confidence in, public transport is important.

### **Our long-term goal:**

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

### **We will:**

1. Work with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport to identify practical solutions to make public travel more accessible for BSL users.
2. Encourage inclusion of BSL awareness within partners regulated transport service driver training, including school transport.
3. Promote BSL awareness training to our patient transport service, licensed taxi drivers/owners.



# Priority 9

## Access to Justice



Issues of justice affects us all. Justice is the concept of fairness. We must be able to exercise our human and civil rights, to live in a just and fair society.

### **Our long-term goal:**

BSL users will have fair and equal access to our justice services.

### **We will:**

1. Ensure offenders and their families have access to BSL support when needed.
2. Raise awareness with our Community Justice Partnerships of the needs of BSL users when accessing justice systems.



# Priority 10

## Democratic Participation



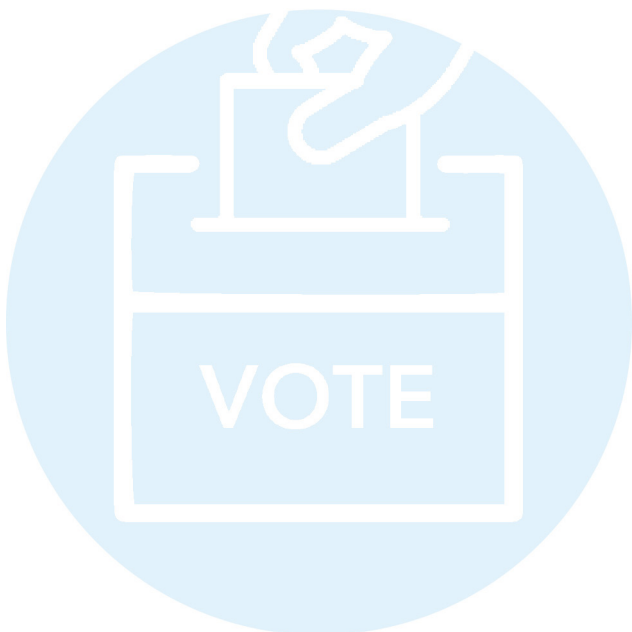
BSL users should be involved in and able to influence the decisions affecting them

### **Our long-term goal:**

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

### **We will:**

1. Promote the Access to Elected Office Fund locally, which can meet the additional costs of BSL users wishing to stand for selection or election in local or Scottish Parliament elections
2. Promote Access to Work support that can help pay for practical support in the workplace.
3. BSL interpreters will be booked for public meetings we organise to encourage participation of BSL users.
4. Raise awareness among elected members about ContactScotlandBSL.
5. Ensure that BSL users have access to information about Elected Members/ Public Appointments in BSL.
6. Provide information on local democratic elections in BSL.





**For further information on the plan please contact:**

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