

Draft British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-30



1^ Whenever we refer to 'BSL users' we mean D/deaf and /or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language.



sustainable thriving achieving

East Dunbartonshire Council

www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk

Contents

Section 1	4
Introduction	4
East Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2024-30	5
Equal Respect	5
Active Offer	5
Normalising	5
How BSL users will have their say	6
Pre-Consultation	6
Profile of BSL users in East Dunbartonshire	7
Who to Contact	9
Section 2	10
Overview of the actions	10
Delivering the BSL East Dunbartonshire Plan 2024-2030	11
BSL Accessibility	12
Children, Young People and their Families	13
Access to Employment	15
Health and Wellbeing	16
Celebrating BSL Culture	17
Transport	18
Access to Justice	19
Democratic Participation	19
Section 3	21
What happens next?	21

Foreword

I am honoured to introduce the East Dunbartonshire Council British Sign Language (BSL) Draft Plan 2024-30, a comprehensive framework aimed at advancing accessibility and inclusivity for the D/deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing community. This plan represents our commitment to recognising and embracing the linguistic and cultural diversity of our society. Through this plan, we strive to ensure that every individual, has equal access to information, services and opportunities. By promoting the use and recognition of BSL we will enhance communication channels and foster a more inclusive and cohesive society where the voices of all our citizens are heard and valued. Together, let us embark on this journey towards greater accessibility and equality and build a brighter future for all.

Thank you
Cllr Gordan Low

Section I

Introduction

On the 6th November 2023, the Scottish Government published the British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan. This plan will be in place until 2029. The plan has ten priority and 45 actions in it, which aim to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL signers to live, work, visit and learn. The BSL National Plan was written with BSL and Deafblind users across Scotland.

The British Sign Language Acts legally recognised BSL as a language of England, Wales and Scotland. The BSL (Scotland) Act works in tandem with existing legislation, most notably the Equality Act 2010, which requires 'reasonable adjustments' to be made by a wide range of people and sectors to ensure that disabled people have equal access to goods and services. Public sector organisations may, therefore, be required to make use of BSL in certain circumstances. Public sector organisations may also consider the use of BSL in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 preserves the architecture of the Equality Act 2010 while also placing a new BSL reporting requirement on the government.

The Scottish Government recognises BSL as one of the languages of Scotland that is an integral part in the lives of many Scottish people. In the work since the first BSL National plan 2017-2023 was published, the Scottish Government has identified further priorities based on discussions with the BSL community (lived experience) and the organisations representing them. The Scottish Government concluded that to tackle barriers effectively, we must consider these in line with work already underway in different areas of government and combine all effects and strengthen the outcomes we want to deliver for the BSL community.

At the forefront equal access, opportunities, representation and inclusion for all BSL users must be promoted as a fundamental right for them as Scottish citizens.

East Dunbartonshire Council stands firmly behind the objectives.

East Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2024-30



The East Dunbartonshire BSL Plan will be in place from 2024 until 2030. It shares the same priority areas with the BSL National Plan and aligns where possible with the same values and priorities. This plan contains a range of actions we will take to make the goals happen and measurable by yearly monitoring.

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and East Dunbartonshire Council mirror the same aims. These are:

- Show our commitment to protecting and supporting BSL including in its tactile form for those with sight loss.
- Recognise and value BSL as a language in its own right.
- Ensure the needs of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users are brought into the heart of our organisations by inclusive approaches.

Equal Respect

Under the provisions of the 2015 Act, The Scottish Government actively works towards establishing the British Sign Language as an official language of Scotland, adopting equal stature with the English language. Consequently, and in keeping with, the Scottish Government anticipates that public authorities will demonstrate with their plans how this principle will be effectively implemented and sustained in good practice. East Dunbartonshire Council is committed to guaranteeing that any British Sign Language components integrated into our operations and services are held to the same standards of quality and excellence as those provided in English.

Active Offer

East Dunbartonshire Council will proactively extend an offer of our British Sign Language services to our employees and the public. This proactive approach ensures that sign language service availability is clearly communicated to all users, actively encouraging their utilisation. This approach will support confidence among British Sign Language users, assuring them that their preference will be accommodated.

Normalising

The primary objective of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 is to foster the sustainability and growth of British Sign Language and its associated culture. East Dunbartonshire Council will endeavour to normalise opportunities for the public and our staff to use British Sign Language, aligning with the objectives outlined in the National British Language Plan.

How BSL users will have their say

East Dunbartonshire Council has worked and will continue to work in partnership with BSL and Deafblind users who live in the local area.

In accordance with the British Sign Language Act (Scotland) Act 2015, public authorities are mandated to seek input on their draft British Sign Language Plan before its submission to the Scottish Government. The pre-consultation period was carried out with stakeholders, BSL and Deafblind users and findings have informed the priorities and consultation methods required to consult on our Draft British Sign Language Plan 2024-30.

The final approved plan will be translated into BSL and uploaded onto the Deafblind Scotland YouTube account as well as East Dunbartonshire YouTube channel and will also be available in English on the Deafblind Scotland website.

Pre-Consultation

The pre-consultation stage of developing our BSL Plan 2024-30 was a critical initial phase that set the tone for effective inclusion and accessibility. During this stage, key stakeholders, including members of the Deaf and Deafblind community, BSL interpreters and relevant community planning partners convened to outline the objectives, scope and consultation methods for the BSL Plan 2024-30. It involved identifying the needs and preferences of the target audience, assessing existing resources and providing insight into the range of community-based opportunities. Establishing clear communication channels, and fostering a collaborative environment was pivotal in ensuring that the BSL Plan is comprehensive, responsive and tailored to the diverse needs of our BSL users. This preparatory phase laid the groundwork for meaningful engagement and consultation throughout the development process and promoted inclusivity and equitable access to information for the Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing individuals.

Profile of BSL users in East Dunbartonshire

BSL users are people who

- Were born with little or no hearing and have used sign language from a very young age.
- Were born hearing but became deaf through illness or accident before learning a spoken language.
- Were born with little or no hearing, learned to speak and use spoken language and learned to sign once they were older.
- Were born deaf with little or no hearing and have used sign language all their lives and who have now lost their sight
- (Deafblind BSL users).
- Were born hearing and chose to learn sign language when they lost their hearing as they got older.
- Are the families of deaf children or families of Deaf parents. There are also BSL users who use tactile BSL as they can no longer see what is signed to them. These people are Deafblind and are also covered by the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

From information gathered in the 2011 Census:

105,026 people live in East Dunbartonshire. **0.2% of the total population use BSL at home.**

This equates to:

- 183 people in East Dunbartonshire who use BSL at home.

Of these:

- 34 would be children and young people aged 3 years to 16 years.
- 124 would be adults aged 16 years to 64 years.
- 15 would be adults aged 65 years to 75 years; and
- 10 would be adults aged 75 years and over.

According to results from the 2011 Census, 6.5% of the East Dunbartonshire population have partial hearing or are deaf, which amounts to 6813 people who reside in the community aged from 0-85 years and over.

6813 people living in East Dunbartonshire in 2011 answered yes to the question “do you have deafness or partial hearing loss”.

This equates to:

80 children and young people aged between birth and 15 years.

1937 adults aged 16 years to 64 years.

1631 adults aged 65 years to 75 years: and

165 adults aged 75 years and over.

2149 people living in East Dunbartonshire in 2011 answered yes to the question “do you have blindness or partial sight loss”.

This equates to:

47 children and young people aged between birth and 15 years.

614 adults aged 16 years to 64 years.

364 adults aged 65 years to 75 years: and

1124 adults aged 75 years and over.

Additional data:

3.4% of the total population in East Dunbartonshire are unemployed. Using the figure for 2018 (108,130) **7 people who use BSL at home are unemployed.**

4.3% of the total population in East Dunbartonshire are from a minority ethnic background. **9 people who use BSL at home are from the black and minority ethnic communities.**

4.4% of the total population live in a one parent family. **9 people who use BSL at home live in a one parent family.**

36.1% of the population live in a household with children. **78 people who use BSL at home live in a household with children** 10.8% of the population have caring responsibilities.

23 people who use BSL at home have caring responsibilities.

1.3% of the total population of young people between the ages of 16 years and 19 years are not in education, employment or training. **3 young people who use BSL at home are not in education, employment or training.**

In total, there are 43,473 households in East Dunbartonshire, which means there are **87 BSL user households in the county.**

17.7% of all households rent their house. **15 households** where people use BSL at home live in rented accommodation.

In 5.9% of all households, one person over the age of 65 years lives alone. **5** people over the age of 65 years who use BSL at home live alone.

Who to Contact

You can contact the Council's Community Planning and Partnerships Team with any questions about this plan and the delivery of it.

communityplanning@eastdunbarton.gov.uk or by emailing Roseann.McCabe@eastdunbarton.gov.uk (Equalities Officer)

0300 123 4510 telephone number

BSL users can contact the Council using [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)



Section 2

Overview of the actions

The East Dunbartonshire Council BSL Plan shares the six-year plan and aligns with the goals for Scottish public services in the BSL National Plan to:

- Show our commitment to protecting and supporting BSL including in its tactile form for those with sight loss.
- Recognise and value BSL as a language in its own right.
- Ensure the needs of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users are brought into the heart of our organisations by inclusive approaches.

Within our action plan, we intricately outline our strategic approach to realising the priority outcomes of our British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-30. By delineating specific steps, actions and initiatives, we aim to transparently convey our commitment of fostering accessibility and ensuring the successful implementation of BSL- related objectives.

Delivering the BSL East Dunbartonshire Plan 2024-2030

Goal 1:” The BSL East Dunbartonshire Plan 2024-2030 will span six years. At the heart of this plan is equality, empowerment and strong partnerships with our BSL and Deafblind community”.

Our Actions by 2024:

-We will facilitate community consultation events and focus groups will be organised for BSL and Deafblind users where they can discuss the main themes of the draft plan. Pre consultation has taken place with BSL and Deafblind users for guidance of lived experience.

-**We** will collate feedback taken from the focus groups. We will analyse code and use as evidence for the final BSL plan. This information is key in understanding lived experience and barriers faced by BSL and Deafblind users.

-**We** will engage closely with public bodies, Equality Advocacy Groups and importantly people with lived experience to establish the preferred, inclusive communication method whilst taking guidance from the BSL users lived experience.

-**We** will establish in partnership with our communities an Equality Advisory group with a chair (Equalities Officer) who will invite stakeholders and partners to an initial launch meeting to implement ways of delivering the actions within the plan and make cross-cutting connections required to progress BSL and Deafblind equality throughout East Dunbartonshire. A term of reference will be agreed, and a record of meetings will be noted and disseminated to members and made available upon request.

-**We** will work to establish an Equality Advisory Group/internal forum. This will be set up within EDC which will meet periodically to review and analysis progress within departments of the statutory commitments, successes and best practices implemented within the BSL draft plan and ultimately for the approved final BSL plan.

Our Actions by 2030:

-**We** will, when the final BSL plan is published be subjected to yearly monitoring reporting which will be made available to our respective Council Elected members and sent to the Scottish Government for review.

-**We** will undertake yearly monitoring progress reports. This will involve the Equality Advisory group to ensure the community voice is embedded in our processes.

BSL Accessibility

Goal 2:” For many BSL users, BSL is their first language. East Dunbartonshire Council recognises that for public services to be truly accessible for BSL users, there should be awareness around the cultures of BSL, and enabling people to access services using their own language”.

Our Actions by 2024:

-We will analyse existing evidence we have about BSL and Deafblind users in our organisation and identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure progress.

-We will undertake an audit of staff members knowledge of BSL.

Our Actions by 2030:

-We will develop the inclusive communication regulation as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) review, to ensure inclusive communication is embedded proportionately by departments and strategic partners when communicating with the BSL community.

-We will ensure there will be BSL translations embedded on the website with an increasing number of links to relevant information in BSL elsewhere online.

-We will ensure BSL users will be better informed about the Council, its services and participating in public life with the top five most visited webpages on our website being translated into BSL as well as associated messaging on our social media platforms.

-We will deliver the “Right to Dream” training conducted by Deafblind Scotland to front facing staff across the Council and extend offer to community planning partners and communities.

-We will support where appropriate, employees within East Dunbartonshire Council to undertake accredited level 3 BSL training.

-We will create and maintain a strong and skilled pool of BSL interpreters by building meaningful relationships with the BSL and Deafblind community to then access preferred suppliers and book preferred BSL interpreters and Electronic Note Takers (ENT).

-We will when appropriate explore opportunity for a suitably qualified and registered interpreter service upon request (and consent) from our local community.

-We will develop information guidance informed by good practice to staff on how to book and work with BSL interpreter(s) and Electronic Note Takers (ENT).

Children, Young People and their Families

Goal 3: “The 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. This is so that every child and young person in East Dunbartonshire can reach their full potential.”

Our Actions by 2024:

-We will support staff within education departments, and colleagues within partner organisations including HSCP to access the Right to Dream training, to help understand the importance of BSL provision on child and family wellbeing.

-We will undertake an audit of our education department that currently embedded community wide BSL and Deafblind learning opportunities.

Our Actions by 2030:

-We will promote and support BSL in our workplace and community, ensuring the care of pupils at key transitional phases, promoting and ensuring annual improvement plans are in place to provide standards and quality reporting.

-We will work together in partnership with children, young people, families and organisations to make East Dunbartonshire the best place for Education opportunities for BSL and Deafblind users.

-We will support opportunities for teachers and support staff of the deaf and deafblind children and young people in obtaining training through the Human Rights approach “A Right to Dream” training to better understand the barriers and lived experiences of the children, young people and their families.

-We will through our education departments who have duties to identify, provide and review the additional support needs of their pupils, including those who are Deaf and Deafblind under the Education (Additional- Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.

-We will support parents who are BSL users across the services provided to their deaf and/or hearing children including GIRFEC, through the provision of accessible information and inclusive communication. The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIFREC) approach will be fully embedded into education life of a BSL or Deafblind user and their family's support.

-We will support parents who are BSL users to be fully involved in the care and support of their deaf or deafblind child/ young person to allow them to achieve better aims and outcomes. We will facilitate the building of partnerships and effective working relationships between the council, HSCP and BSL and Deafblind users. The number of information requests will be recorded, and feedback gathered from those who receiving information/support. The number of interpreter requests will be recorded and the preferred supplier for interpreters accessed for all face-to-face meetings.

-We will through the GIRFEC model for all children in education, in East Dunbartonshire, and authorities will work together to build the support network for BSL and Deafblind children and young people.

-We will strengthen partnerships between relevant organisations to overcome any barriers for BSL and Deafblind users to ensure they have the support they need all of stages of their education journey so that they can feel empowered and reach their full potential.

-We will develop a clear pathway for Deaf and Deafblind children and young people to help promote the use of BSL at each stage of their educational journey whilst enabling them to maximize their potential at school by ensuring they have the right support network in place.

-We will work with our partners, including communities to explore opportunities for parents and wider family members to learn BSL alongside their deaf children.

-We will work with our education departments to embed community wide BSL and Deafblind learning opportunities.

-We will explore partnership opportunities with local third sector and further education establishments to increase the access and availability of BSL to pupils and parents and carers.

Access to Employment

Goal 4: “No One Left Behind is our all-age approach to employability support in East Dunbartonshire. Support is available to all who need it”.

Our Actions by 2024:

-We will raise awareness locally of the UK Government’s “Access to Work” (AtW) scheme with employers and with BSL and Deafblind users so that they can benefit from the support it provides.

-We will signpost young people to a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process.

Our Actions by 2030:

-We will provide a person-centred approach to our BSL and Deafblind users to develop their skills, consider what route to employment is right for them and support their entry into the workforce so that they can fulfil their potential.

-We will develop opportunities for deaf and deafblind people to learn about transitioning into and navigating the workplace whilst helping them understand the support available to them that can enhance their skills.

-We will share information about Third Sector organisations which provide support and resources around BSL (to Local Authority partners and to the local third sector who wish to engage volunteers) to help ensure increased access to opportunities to BSL users.

-We will achieve a 30% reduction in barriers for BSL users accessing employment information.

-We will gather and review evidence from employees within the community who are BSL users and identify any barriers to address and explore opportunities.

-We will work with employability service providers and employers to improve knowledge of Deaf culture, available support and best practices

-We will work alongside our BSL and Deafblind users to guide, support and empower them to promote BSL and Deafblind within our community.

-We will explore opportunities to support our BSL and Deafblind users working with our staff in Skills & Youth Employment to support increased awareness and knowledge on BSL best practices.

Health and Wellbeing

Goal 5:” 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”.

Our Actions by 2024:

-We will signpost BSL and Deafblind users to health and social care information available in BSL.

-We will raise awareness of local opportunities, including the BDS BSL Café project to better understand the barriers deaf and deafblind people face and to support increased connection.

Our Actions by 2030:

-We will work in partnership with BSL and Deafblind users to establish the information important to them.

-We will work in partnership with Health and Social Care (HSCP) and third sector partners to develop appropriate information in formats and online as easy read material and recorded signed material.

-We will promote our access guide, and we will explore making it available in the form of videos signed by our BSL community.

-We will work with our Health and Social Care services (HSCP) to reduce social isolation is inclusive of the needs of BSL users.

-We will work with our Health and Social Care Services to improve the Deaf and Deafblind community’s knowledge of mental health services.

-We will work with community planning partnership and communities to promote information about local sports and Leisure facilities, sporting opportunities as well as other events in BSL friendly material.

Celebrating BSL Culture

Goal 6: “Culture can improve the life chances of all people at every stage in their life. In East Dunbartonshire, culture can be an important element to help reduce poverty and mitigate its impacts”.

Our Aims by 2024:

-We will include articles on BSL, within the Taking Part (Tenancy) newsletter.

-We will work with Deaf and Deafblind people in the local community to promote and understand the heritage and culture of BSL.

Our Aims by 2030:

-We will support the development of opportunities for deaf and deafblind children, young people, and their families to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL.

-We will support BSL and Deafblind users to celebrate BSL culture and heritage to strengthen the community whilst sharing their rich and vibrant culture to feel more widely valued within the local community.

BSL Data

Goal 7: “We recognise that there has been extensive work within academia and the third sector to build up evidence and data around BSL users, deaf and deafblind people, which is essential for informing public policy and shaping services to meet people’s needs”.

Our Aims by 2024:

-We will include a question in our Equality’s monitoring questionnaire form in relation to the understanding of BSL.

-We will ask our BSL and Deafblind community to trial and feedback to respected departments within the council as to accessibility and easy read materials.

-We will ensure Sensory HI services will have accurate information on all BSL users within school and early years settings.

-We will incorporate a question on disabilities into our housing department settling-in questionnaire.

Our Aims by 2030:

- We** will use learning and feedback from lived experience to explore opportunities to increase staff awareness and embed insights into future EQIA (Equality Impact Assessments).

- We** will explore opportunities to work with local Deaf and Deafblind community organisations to develop a programme of training and awareness.

- We** will increase staff awareness on methods adopted in EDC by listening to knowledge and feedback from our Deaf community to improve access to consultation methods used in planning and policy stages.

Transport

Goal 8: “Transport Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework for Scotland focuses on supporting disabled people’s rights by removing barriers and improving access to travel”.

Our Actions by 2014:

- We** will include our BSL and Deafblind community actively in consultations regarding transport to remove barriers and learn from lived experience.

Our Actions by 2030:

- We** will directly involve our Deaf and Deafblind community with East Dunbartonshire’s accessibility transport forum and provide appropriate communication support.

- We** will work in partnership with Transport Scotland using the principles of the Accessible Travel Framework to improve transport services for BSL and Deafblind users.

- We** will commit to working with East Dunbartonshire transport delivery bodies, rail and bus operators to collaborate and identify practical solutions to make public travel more accessible for SL and Deafblind users.

- We** will advocate with Police Scotland for data collection on the language and communication support needs of people involved in traffic accidents in the authority area.

Access to Justice

Goal 9: “Our vision is for a just, safe and resilient Scotland. Issues of Justice affect us all. Justice is the concept of fairness. We must be able to exercise our human and civil rights, in order to live in a just and fair society”.

Our Actions by 2024:

-We will, in partnership with our Community Planning Partners strengthen BSL user’s voices.

Our Actions by 2030:

-We will endeavour to ensure our BSL users are informed and involved in public life and in local decision-making.

-We will explore and support public bodies within the justice sector to understand ways in which BSL support can be accessed efficiently for frontline workers.

-We will commit to ensuring that local Police officers are aware of the Police Scotland procedural guidance to accessing BSL interpreters for those that require it. This will minimise unnecessary distress and therefore help to reduce any further trauma if reporting as a victim and allow fair access to justice for anyone alleged to have committed a crime.

Democratic Participation

Goal 10: “A focus on people, performance, partnership and prevention of harm continue to shape the Public Service Reform agenda in Scotland. At the heart of this is the recognition that no single action can achieve transformational change alone, and that people should be involved in and able to influence the decisions that are affecting them”.

Our Actions by 2024:

-We will support our BSL users to be fully involved in democratic and public life in East Dunbartonshire, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies.

-We will support BSL users and Deafblind people to be aware of the new implementations in voting and documentation required with assistance of how to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.

-We will work with colleagues in democratic services and the Electoral Commission and Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB) to facilitate BSL support in electoral campaigns and consultation events to ensure BSL users can make informed decisions with access to all relevant information.

Our Actions by 2030:

-We will support active participation as a key theme in democratic activities within the Council.

-We will monitor and raise awareness amongst elected members about [contactscotlandBSL](#).

-We will work with COSLA and the Scottish Parliament to identify existing barriers in support for BSL users within political settings, such as councillors and people involved in democratic activities, and consider ways in which gaps can be addressed.

-We will support the Equalities Forum Group to be involved in decision making processes and will use insights from the lived experience to inform best practices.

-We will support BSL users to participate in the community.

-We will support greater connectivity and engagement between community planning partners and those with lived experience.

Section 3

What happens next?

East Dunbartonshire Council will put in place an Equalities Forum Group which will support the Council's work on the aims of this BSL plan 2024-30, which will proactively support lived-experienced voices to be heard in the monitoring of the implementation of the plan. The group will be made up of Council Officers, strategic partners and third-party organisations who promote the use and understanding of BSL in the East Dunbartonshire Council area. This information will be fed back quarterly in meetings with the BSL and Deafblind community. Progress in delivering this plan will be formally reported in 2025 and again yearly throughout the life span of the plan.

Draft British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-30



Other formats

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or in audio format and can be translated into other community languages. Please contact the Council's Communications & Engagement Team at:

East Dunbartonshire Council, 12 Strathkelvin Place, Southbank,
Kirkintilloch G66 1TJ Tel: 0300 123 4510

For more information, please contact the Council's Communications & Engagement Team at:
Tel: 0300 123 4510 or email: communications@eastdunbarton.gov.uk
For more information, please contact the Council's Communications & Engagement Team at:
Tel: 0300 123 4510 or email: communications@eastdunbarton.gov.uk
For more information, please contact the Council's Communications & Engagement Team at:
Tel: 0300 123 4510 or email: communications@eastdunbarton.gov.uk



sustainable thriving achieving

East Dunbartonshire Council

www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk