



Scottish Information
Commissioner
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British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2023

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Introduction

Background

1. This is the British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for the Scottish Information Commissioner, produced in compliance with sections two and three of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. The Plan sets out the actions which the Scottish Information Commissioner will take over the period 2018-2023 to improve access to information and services for BSL users.
2. The British Sign Language version of this Plan is available at www.itspublicknowledge.info.
3. To the extent that the functions of the Scottish Information Commissioner are exercisable using BSL, our Plan follows the BSL National Plan, published on 24 October 2017, which was developed by the Scottish Government through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.
4. Our BSL Plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the National Plan, where these are relevant to the work of the Scottish Information Commissioner, specifically in the area of Scottish Public Services.
5. Like the National BSL Plan, the Scottish Information Commissioner Plan starts from the principled position that BSL is a language in its own right and that BSL users, like all other citizens of Scotland, have the right to engage with and access information about Scottish Information Commissioner and our services when they so choose, without unnecessary barriers, including language barriers. The Plan recognises that many BSL users neither use nor understand English and that, for some, written or spoken English is not a first or even second language.
6. The Scottish Information Commissioner BSL Plan was developed with input from the Scottish Parliament and other parliamentary Officeholders, and from feedback gathered from BSL users.
7. The Scottish Information Commissioner is committed to continued engagement around a) implementing actions and b) providing feedback on progress. We see our Plan as a 'living document' and, as such, it will be revised and reissued as necessary, or at least every five years. We will contribute to the national progress review (interim report) on the National BSL Plan scheduled for 2020. To take account of the outcomes of this review, we have included a review period in 2021.

Executive Summary

8. The Scottish Information Commissioner is committed to ensuring that all members of the public have access to the Commissioner's broad range of statutory functions. The Scottish Information Commissioner is impartial and independent of the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and other Scottish public authorities. This means the Commissioner cannot be told what the outcome of an appeal must be, but decides it based on the evidence and arguments from both the requester and the authority.
9. The Commissioner's duties include:
 - telling people about their right to see information held by Scottish public authorities
 - making sure public authorities follow the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004

- monitoring freedom of information and encouraging public authorities to have and follow procedures for making their information available to you
 - making sure public authorities publish information under the publication scheme duty
 - carrying out appeals when information has not been provided by a Scottish public authority to someone who asks for information
10. We recognise our duties to promote equality of opportunity for all, including BSL users. We support the Scottish Government's long-term goal as set out in the BSL National Plan:
- "to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit."*
11. Our first BSL Plan sets out 14 commitments to support this vision and we will undertake these commitments between now and 2023. We will contribute to the national progress review (interim report) on the National BSL Plan scheduled for 2020 and we will review progress against our own plan in 2021.

Our Commitments

Access to services

12. We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:
- "Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users"*
13. To support this, by 2023 we will:
- (i) 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.
 - (ii) Make information about our functions, and how to access and use our service, accessible to BSL users, including producing new BSL materials.
 - (iii) Begin a programme of work to increase the accessibility of our website and social media channels.
 - (iv) Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL', which allows BSL users to contact public and third sector services, and for these services to contact them.
 - (v) Train our staff to use online interpreting video relay services (such as contactScotland-BSL), and explore the potential for greater use.
 - (vi) Raise awareness amongst all staff of the needs of BSL users through training and induction programmes.
 - (vii) Put in place systems for the obtaining of BSL / English interpretation and translation services, including interpretation for deaf-blind BSL users.
 - (viii) Respond promptly to requests from BSL users to arrange BSL / English interpreting when required for access to our services.
 - (ix) Ensure our policies of promoting diversity in the workplace are widely disseminated among BSL user communities.
 - (x) Make training available to staff who would like to learn BSL.

- (xi) Develop and make available online BSL versions of key guidance including “Your Right to Know”.
- (xii) Increase awareness of and invite applications from BSL users for our External Engagement events.
- (xiii) Consider the needs and requirements of BSL users in our planning for public engagement meetings and outreach events.

Democracy

14. We share the long term goal for BSL users to be fully involved in democratic and public life in Scotland, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies. Freedom of information is a key enabler of informed engagement in democratic and public life. To support this, in addition to improving access to our services as set out above, by 2023 we will:
 - (xiv) Work with public authorities subject to the Freedom of Information legislation to consider the needs of BSL users in their Freedom of Information processes.

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