

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

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1. Introduction

This is our British Sign Language (BSL) Plan setting out how we will promote and support BSL in accordance with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

Our plan follows the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan, published in October 2017, which was developed through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

Wherever a reference is made to 'BSL users', we mean D/deaf and/or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language.

A BSL version of this Plan is available on the [NRS website](#).

2. About Us

National Records of Scotland (NRS) is a non-Ministerial department of the Scottish Government, supporting the Registrar General for Scotland and the Keeper of the Records for Scotland. Our work underpins the fabric of Scottish society: telling the story of our nation through the records we hold and the data we gather and produce on behalf of the people of Scotland.

As the official Scottish national archive we are guardians of over 800 years of irreplaceable national documents spanning the 12th to the 21st centuries touching on virtually every aspect of Scottish life. We are the Scottish official source of demographic statistics and administer the census of Scotland's population. We produce information about our population, households, migration, vital events (such as births, deaths and marriages), life expectancy and electoral statistics which help inform policy decisions across central and local Government, and the private and third sectors.

We work in partnership with the Scottish Government and the wider public sector to deliver a national Data Linkage Framework to facilitate ethical research that protects privacy whilst benefiting Scotland and informing national investment priorities. We support Scottish public bodies' compliance with the Public Records Scotland Act 2011 and as expert advisers in information and records management we fulfil a leadership role for the archive sector and work to secure the future of physical and digital records. We make our information as accessible as is reasonably possible, while preserving it for the future and are committed to making more information available over time through digital channels.

3. Summary

The BSL National Plan has ten long-term goals that represent the Scottish Government's collective ambition for BSL in Scotland. The NRS BSL Plan is based on the contribution we can make to the long-term goal on Scottish Public Services, which is:



'Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users.'

In setting out how we plan to contribute to this goal we have focussed on our current assumptions for delivering [Scotland's Census 2021](#), and we would welcome views on these to ensure we can make the census as inclusive as possible for BSL users.

While Scotland's Census 2021 is a key programme, NRS operates across a number of sectors and delivers a wide range of diverse services through onsite and online channels. We would therefore welcome views on how we can support BSL users by making these services more accessible.

We will use these views to help expand our plan with a target of spring 2019 to publish an updated version.

We will also consider as part of developing an NRS wide plan whether we can contribute to the long-term goal on Culture and the Arts which is:



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

4. Sharing your views

To share your views on the NRS BSL Plan please respond to:

Email: simon.hazlewood@nrscotland.gov.uk

Post: Simon Hazlewood, National Records of Scotland, Ladywell House, Ladywell Road, Edinburgh, EH12 7TF

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)
contactSCOTLAND-BSL

5. Our actions



‘Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users.’

BSL National Plan Action 01 – ‘develop and test a new question on the use of BSL in Scotland for potential inclusion in Scotland’s Census 2021. This will give us a more accurate profile of Scotland’s BSL users.’

NRS response - As the public body with responsibility for Scotland’s Census 2021, we will take the leading role in implementing this action.

In April 2018 we undertook development and testing, and made proposals for a BSL use question, along with other questions for Scotland’s Census 2021. They are included in our [Plans for Scotland’s Census 2021](#) which sets out proposals for how the census will be conducted and the questions it will ask. More specific information on the results of BSL question testing can be found in our [Language Topic Report](#).

BSL National Plan Action 02 - ‘analyse existing evidence and gather further data about BSL, so that we can establish baselines and measure how we are making progress.’

NRS response - The information we produce from Scotland’s Census 2021 will provide our contribution to this second action. Information derived from the 2011 Census on BSL has been heavily used for policy development and monitoring and legislative work, and provided evidence of need which was used in support of the new legislation to promote the use of understanding of BSL in Scotland, in the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

We have consulted users on topics for [Scotland’s Census 2021](#), and in response users told us that having information about use of languages other than English at home is important, for planning services where additional support in the English language may be required and to help understand diverse communities. A need for information on BSL, in addition to use ‘at home’ was also identified.

Outputs from the census are being geared to the needs of different user communities – the general public, local authorities and other major users, academic researchers, the European Union and others. We have already begun engaging with users around the content, format, timing and method for the release of 2021 census outputs and will continue to engage with users over the next few years to ensure that the outputs produced meet a wide range of user needs.

BSL National Plan Action 03 – ‘develop, test and share a set of guidelines to help Scottish public services to improve access to information and services for BSL users. This will include advice on how to involve BSL users in the design and delivery of Scotland’s public services.’

NRS response - In terms of improving access to information and services for BSL users we will in all of our work follow established Scottish Government accessibility standards in developing public services.

We are aware of and will look to adopt emerging guidelines from the Office of the Chief Designer around involving BSL users in the design process. The census website will comply fully with established Scottish Government accessibility standards in terms of its design, content and underlying technology.

Content will be presented, where appropriate to make a reasonable adjustment, with accompanying BSL video translations. Written content will have a target reading age of a nine-year-old level to be accessible to users who do not have English as a first language.

BSL National Plan Action 05 – ‘promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service (VRS) called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’, which allows BSL users to contact public and third sector services and for these services to contact them, and explore the potential for its greater use.’

NRS response - We will as part of our assisted digital service provision for Scotland’s Census 2021 promote the use of ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’ as the video relay service for BSL users who need to get in touch to ask questions and seek further help or guidance.

BSL National Plan Action 06 – ‘encourage public bodies to access BSL awareness training for staff who may work with BSL users, and signpost to appropriate training’.

NRS response – We will work with deaf/deafblind organisations to develop a programme of training and awareness for frontline staff providing support to the public during the 2021 Census operation, which may include BSL users.