



West Lothian Council British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2024 -2030

Contents

Introduction

West Lothian in context

Consultation and engagement

The West Lothian Plan 2024-2030

Actions for 2024 – 2030

Introduction

The Scottish Government published its British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2023-2029 on the 6th November 2023. The aim of the plan is to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL signers to live, work, visit and learn. The national plan focuses on ten priorities with an emphasis on children, young people and their families, health and wellbeing, celebrating deaf culture and tackling accessibility for BSL users. Each of the priorities has a mix of short, mid and long-term goals that will be delivered in the six-year life of the plan that will build the foundations required to meet the longer term ambition for BSL in Scotland. [The National Plan](#) includes:

- Delivering the National Plan
- BSL Accessibility
- Children, Young People and their Families
- Access to Employment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Celebrating BSL Culture
- BSL Data
- Transport
- Access to Justice
- Democratic Participation

The West Lothian Council BSL plan is framed around the same long-term goals and priority areas as the Scottish Government BSL National Plan 2023-2029 and contains a range of measurable actions that aim to ensure equal access to services and support for BSL users across West Lothian. The West Lothian Council plan does not include actions for Delivering the National Plan due to these being directed to the Scottish Government and actions specific to Access to Justice have been included in the BSL Accessibility theme.

This plan is available on the Council website in both BSL and English.

West Lothian in context

West Lothian is a great place to live, work and do business, West Lothian Council aims to improve the quality of life and opportunities for all citizens. We are a top performing Council with a reputation for innovation, partnership working and customer focus.

The Council is central to the provision of services that affect people's everyday lives, for example, housing, education, libraries, leisure and benefits. We therefore recognise that all services provided by the Council need to reflect and consider the impact that they may have on equality. We aim to provide improved services that meet the needs and priorities of local communities.

West Lothian is the ninth largest local authority in Scotland serving a population of approximately 178,500, accounting for 3.3% of Scotland's population and one of the youngest and fastest growing in the country.

According to the last Census in 2011 there were 463 people living in West Lothian using BSL at home, 124 of those are under 18.

Consultation and engagement

The Scottish Government held a public consultation with forty-three community consultation events from the 7th July 2023 to 9th September 2023. The Scottish Government's [consultation feedback](#) and subsequent key themes were used as the basis for consultation in West Lothian.

In February and March 2024 West Lothian Council participated in a Pan Lothian consultation event involving other local authorities, NHS Lothian and other interested organisations and groups.

This was followed up in March 2024 with a West Lothian Council specific consultation event. This involved council officers, 3rd Sector organisations, West Lothian College and West Lothian residents who use BSL.

The feedback from the consultation and engagement informed the final actions within this Local Plan.

West Lothian Council Local Plan 2018-2024

During the delivery of the 2018 – 2024 plan the council supported BSL users by:

- Ensuring that services can request BSL interpretation.
- Promoting ContactScotlandBSL via our intranet.
- Delivering Statutory Social Work services to residents of West Lothian. This includes the provision of sensory support provided by Deaf Action Scotland who are commissioned on behalf of West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership to provide support.
- By making available on the council website information on the Access to Elected Office Fund.
- Coordinating an annual Pan Lothian Day that brings together professionals across the Lothian area to work collaboratively to increase knowledge and understanding of ways support deaf learners.
- Creating parental networking opportunities that include professionals from different services and provide information and support to help build confidence, knowledge and connections with other parents and carers.
- Purchasing Highland Council's British Sign Language Education Pack so that all schools can access resources via the 1+2 Languages Sharepoint space.
- Delivery of BSL awareness raising events and introductory BSL classes.

West Lothian Council Local Plan 2024 -2030

The 2024-2030 plan will build upon these success and focuses on local goals including:

- Improving accessibility of information and services across West Lothian.
- Embedding the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach with Deaf and Deafblind children and their families.
- Making West Lothian Council an accessible and inclusive place to work.
- Providing access to information and services in relation to Health (including Social Care), Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- Embedding BSL further within culture and the arts in West Lothian.
- Involving BSL users in democratic and public life in West Lothian.

The actions set out in the pages below provide the detail of how the West Lothian Council Local Plan 2024-2030 aims to achieve the goals above.

Actions for 2024 to 2030

BSL Accessibility We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: <i>“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..”</i>	
By 2030 we will:	Service Ownership:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the council’s website to include information in BSL, where possible, to reduce barriers to accessing services online.	Corporate Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the use of the Scottish Government’s funded BSL online interpreting video relay services contactSCOTLANDBSL to employees in order to support BSL service users.	Corporate Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Following implementation by the Scottish Government, promote SignPort as an online portal for BSL/ English interpreter bookings. (SignPort is expected to be launched for public use in Spring 2024)	Corporate Services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme of training and awareness for front line employees and those who work directly with BSL users. 	Housing, Customer and Building Services Education Social Policy Anti Poverty Service
--	---

<p>Children, Young People and their Families We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:</p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p>	
<p>By 2030 we will:</p>	<p>Service Ownership:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for deaf and deafblind children, young people and their families to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL. 	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote access to the Scottish Government opportunities for targeted workers to learn BSL up to an appropriate SCQF Level. 	Education Social Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of Enquire (the Scottish advice service for additional support or learning) to support the council’s duty to identify, provide for and review the additional support needs of pupils. 	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that services supporting children (Education and Social Care) understand the referral pathways available to ensure children and their families can be supported to access the healthcare and language support they need. 	Education Social Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement advice developed by Education Scotland to a) Improve the way teachers engage effectively with parents who use BSL and b) ensure that parents who use BSL know how they can be further involved in their child’s education. 	Education

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Bookbug sessions that are available in West Lothian to deaf and deafblind families. 	Housing, Customer and Building Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure BSL is included as part of the annual audits on 1+2 languages in schools. 	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (SCILT) programme of work to support the learning of BSL in schools for hearing pupils as part of the 1+2 programme, including the sharing of best practice, guidance and develop some case studies of practice and also to further explore potential opportunities within the curriculum beyond 1+2 delivery. 	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build capacity and an understanding of deaf education in schools through staff training opportunities. 	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate an annual Pan Lothian event for all professionals to work collaboratively and enhance knowledge and understanding to support deaf learners. 	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop events for the families of deaf babies and children to create network opportunities and build confidence. 	Education

<p>Access to Employment</p> <p>We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:</p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p>	
By 2030 we will:	Service Ownership:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure BSL speaking pupils and students are supported with appropriate and accessible information, advice and guidance about their career and learning choices and the transition process to these options. 	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through No One Left Behind, deliver place-based employability services which support individuals to overcome structural barriers to entering and sustaining employment. 	Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that BSL users can apply for vacancies and engage with recruitment processes in the council in a way that considers and responds to their needs. 	Corporate

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness with recruiting managers of the need to consider reasonable adjustments to recruitment processes and/or roles for BSL users. 	Corporate

<p>Health and Wellbeing We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:</p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p>	
By 2030 we will:	Service Ownership:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and support the learning of BSL as a second language for hard of hearing, deafened people and people at risk of a second sensory loss. 	Health and Social Care Partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that any local work to tackle social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users. 	Social Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to improve the information available to BSL users regarding Psychological Services and ensure that these services and therapies can be offered on a fair and equal basis to BSL users. 	Health and Social Care Partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take steps to improve access to information for BSL users about sport and to local sports facilities and sporting opportunities. 	Finance and Property Services

<p>Celebrating BSL Culture We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:</p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p>	
By 2030 we will:	Service Ownership:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Creative Scotland to help embed BSL further within culture and the arts in West Lothian. 	Housing, Customer and Building Services Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase availability of signed events and performances. 	Housing, Customer and Building Services Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the use of digital technology to enhance the experience of BSL users when visiting exhibitions and / or accessing museum collections. 	Housing, Customer and Building Services

<p>BSL Data We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:</p> <p><i>“To strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community in Scotland to better inform decision making in public policy and service design.”</i></p>	
By 2030 we will:	Service Ownership:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the data from the Census and any other sources to better understand our local BSL population to explore issues such as accessibility and access to services. 	Corporate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve the information held on employees and their competency of BSL. 	Corporate

<p>Transport We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:</p> <p><i>“BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland.”</i></p>	
By 2030 we will:	Service Ownership:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide BSL information on application process for the National Entitlement Card. 	Operational Services (Community Transport)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide BSL accessible information on Community Transport Services 	Operational Services (Community Transport)
--	---

<p>Democratic Participation</p> <p>We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:</p> <p><i>“BSL users will 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.”</i></p>	
By 2030 we will:	Service Ownership:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recommendations from the West Lothian Council Barriers to Elected Office short life working group to identify barriers and consider ways in which to support BSL users in elected office. 	Corporate Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take opportunities to promote the Access to Elected Office Fund locally, which could provide funding towards the additional costs of BSL users wishing to stand for selection or election in local or Scottish Parliament elections. 	Corporate Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness among Elected Members about contactSCOTRLANDBSL. 	Corporate Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure relevant electoral staff are aware of the need to provide appropriate information on voting processes to BSL users. 	Corporate Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise resources from the Electoral Commission once available to provide ongoing support for BSL users’ participation in democratic life. 	Corporate Services