

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Depute Chief Executive and Director of Education
to Service and Partnerships Performance Panel
of 11 March 2025**

Subject: Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2024-2030 – Operational Action Plan

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide details on the co-produced operational action plan which has been developed by the Ayrshire Equality Partnership to support the Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan 2024-2030.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:

2.1.1 notes the BSL Plan (2018-2024) Final Report (Appendix 1); and

2.1.2 notes the co-produced operational action plan to support the Ayrshire BSL Local Plan 2024-2030 (Appendix 2).

3. Background

- 3.1 The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users* to live, work and visit. This means that people whose first or preferred language is BSL will be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens, and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

** Wherever we refer 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.*

- 3.2 The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years, showing how they will promote, and facilitate the promotion of the use and understanding BSL in Scotland. These plans will take account of local circumstances and consider how best to respond to BSL users' needs within local communities, organisations or services.

- 3.3 As highlighted to Cabinet on 23 April 2024, the first Ayrshire Shared BSL Plan (2018-2024) was [approved](#) by Leadership Panel on 18 September 2018. A shared plan was agreed to ensure consistency across Ayrshire. Appendix 1 provides a detailed final report to close off the first Ayrshire Shared BSL Plan.

- 3.4 It was agreed to continue to collaborate on a pan-Ayrshire basis and the new Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan 2024-2030 was [approved](#) by Cabinet on the 23rd April 2024 where it was agreed that the supporting operational action plan was to be submitted to Service and Partnerships Performance Panel for information and future updates (this will be on an annual basis).

4. Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that Panel:

4.1.1 notes the BSL Plan (2018-2024) Final Report (Appendix 1); and

4.1.2 notes the new BSL Plan 2024-2030 Operational Action Plan (Appendix 2) which has been developed in partnership with Ayrshire College; East, North and South Ayrshire Councils; East, North and South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

- 4.2 The Ayrshire Shared BSL Plan and supporting operational plan is reflective of the priorities contained within the Scottish Government's [National BSL Plan 2023-2029](#), which was published on 6 November 2023.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are consistent with legal requirements BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Risk

8.1 Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations

8.2.1 The risks associated with rejecting the recommendations are a failure to meet the statutory obligations BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

9. Equalities

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA), (including the Fairer Scotland Duty in respect of any Strategic decision), had been previously carried out (May 2024) on the Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2024-2030. This is still relevant and is attached as Appendix 3.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

- 10.1 **Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contributes to all three priorities of the Council Plan (Spaces and Places; Live, Work and Learn; and Civic and Community Pride).

13. Results of Consultation

- 13.1 There has been public consultation as part of the development process as set out in the extract below section 4 of the Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan 2024-2030:

'From the outset, representatives from the various partner organisations have taken steps to directly involve BSL users from across Ayrshire in the development of this plan. We have engaged with representatives from the Ayrshire Society for the Deaf, BSL students from Ayrshire College, the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service and representatives from Elderbank Primary School, Grange Academy and Greenwood Academy. Key themes were identified that we have reflected in this plan's aims. This engagement with the BSL community was undertaken with appropriate BSL language interpreters to ensure clear two-way dialogue to assist us in capturing their views in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way.'

- 13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Hugh Hunter, Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

Background Papers [Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language \(BSL\) Local Plan 2018 - 2024](#)

Report to Cabinet of 23 April 2024 – [2Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language \(BSL\) Local Plan 2024-30](#)

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Date: 3 March 2025

Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2018-2024

Final Report

Executive Summary

The British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years that show how they will promote and support BSL*. In 2018, public sector partners across Ayrshire including Ayrshire College, East, North and South Ayrshire Councils, East, North and South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Ayrshire and Arran, developed and published a shared BSL Local Plan. The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan sets our collective intentions in how we planned to improve communication and access to services for BSL users who work, learn, and live in Ayrshire. The BSL Local Plan sets out ten long-term goals for BSL in Ayrshire and described the actions that would be taken between 2018 and 2024 to progress towards these goals. This report outlines the progress on the actions over the last three years, since our mid-term report of 2021.

Actions were set out within the ten long-term goals across the following areas:

- Scottish Public Services
- Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare
- School Education
- Post-School Education
- Training, Work and Social Security
- Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Transport
- Culture and the Arts
- Justice
- Democracy

* Wherever we refer 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.

Scottish Public Services

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.”

What We Said

We will provide Deaf awareness training for staff, particularly frontline employees.

What We Did

Partners continue to promote BSL Awareness and training to employees. In North Ayrshire, 20 employees attended BSL and Deaf Awareness sessions delivered by the Sensory Impairment team and 267 employees engaged in the online BSL and Tactile BSL course. Two employees within the Sensory Impairment Team completed a British Sign Language Level 1 qualification at Ayr College and are in the process of seeking a Level 2 course in 2025.

The BSL awareness sessions evaluated positively, with attendees from across the council, working in Communities, Health and Social Care Partnership, Democratic Services and Education; a selection of participant comments are highlighted below.

“This has given me an awareness of the different supports that the Sensory Impairment team can provide, it also was a brilliant networking opportunity, and I felt comfortable trying out the BSL alphabet in front of the group, so helped with my confidence as many first-timers there too. I will definitely be learning at home now as want to develop my skills further.”

“I learned how to spell using BSL, and I gained an awareness of things around BSL and hearing impairments that I otherwise wouldn't have known”.

“I feel better equipped to provide services to people with a hearing impairment”.

We will continue to run awareness and training opportunities as we move into 2025, with regular awareness sessions being planned throughout the year. In addition, we will be exploring bespoke sessions with frontline services to help them understand basic communication phrases that they can use with BSL clients.

South Ayrshire had one member of staff from their Communities Team attend a British Sign Language Introductory course at Ayr College and one member of the Communities Team attend Level One. On completion of the introductory course the member of staff has signed up to complete Level One BSL. As we move into 2025, South Ayrshire Council will have 10 members of staff from their Employability and Skills team commence the Level One qualification.

Similar to North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire Council will continue to promote training opportunities council wide. They will continue to promote our BSL Awareness training on our internal training site.

What We Said

We will jointly promote ContactScotland-BSL service to staff and service users.

What We Did

The [ContactScotland-BSL](#) service continues to be promoted by partners through various channels, including at awareness and engagement sessions and through partner websites. As part of their role, employees within the North Ayrshire Sensory Impairment Team promote ContactScotland-BSL when meeting with BSL service users.

ContactScotland-BSL is a free national BSL Video Interpreting Relay Service. This allows BSL users with a smart device to call ContactScotland using video to relay a request in BSL to the interpreter. The interpreter can then call any service provider the BSL client wishes to. This service can be used to set up appointments or ask questions, it can even be used to order fast food or book tickets at various venues and is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It should be noted that it cannot be used for actual appointments or interviews.

The partners will continue to raise awareness and facilitate briefing sessions as required as we move into 2025 and beyond.



What We Said

We will develop a specific BSL page on our public websites with information in BSL, or signposting to relevant information that is available in BSL.

What We Did

Each partner has developed a specific BSL landing page on their external websites. These pages contain a range of information, including BSL plans, contact information, and sources of support, such as the British Deaf Association (Scotland), ContactScotland BSL and the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service. The partners are continuing to work with the BSL community on the content of the BSL pages to update and continually improve what is available – [North Ayrshire Council BSL](#)

What We Said

We will explore the use of technology to help meet communication support requirements

What We Did

Within North Ayrshire additional smartphones have been purchased for the Sensory Impairment Team to help strengthen their engagement and support for the local BSL community. This resource has enhanced communication by enabling Deaf service users to video call the Sensory Impairment duty service using BSL, or text in requests for assistance. This was particularly beneficial to BSL service users during the Covid pandemic and the additional phones help to further enhance this provision.

Within the Sensory Team in South Ayrshire, we continue to explore the use of technology to help meet communication support requirements. All members of the team have work smartphones to help strengthen engagement and support the local BSL community. In addition, we have a team mobile where members of the BSL community can text in requests for support.

What We Said

We will establish a diverse Ayrshire-wide user network to enhance the implementation of the Ayrshire BSL Local Plan.

What We Did

Engagement with the BSL community has continued throughout the life of the plan with key BSL community-based groups including the Ayrshire Society for the Deaf, the Ayrshire Deaf club and students from Ayrshire College. A new implementation group with key BSL representatives from the various groups is being formed as we move into the implementation phase of our BSL Plan 2024 – 2030.

What We Said

We will raise awareness of translation and interpretation procedures to ensure employees can readily access the appropriate communication for service users.

What We Did

Access to BSL interpretation and translation services is available on internal organisational intranets. Partners previously explored the possibility of a joint tender process for translation and interpretation services but due to the complexity of various internal procedures, ultimately this was not viable. Each individual organisation has its own procurement process in place for BSL Interpretation and Sign Language services.

Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

We share the long-term goal for family support, early learning and childcare set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“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.”

What We Said

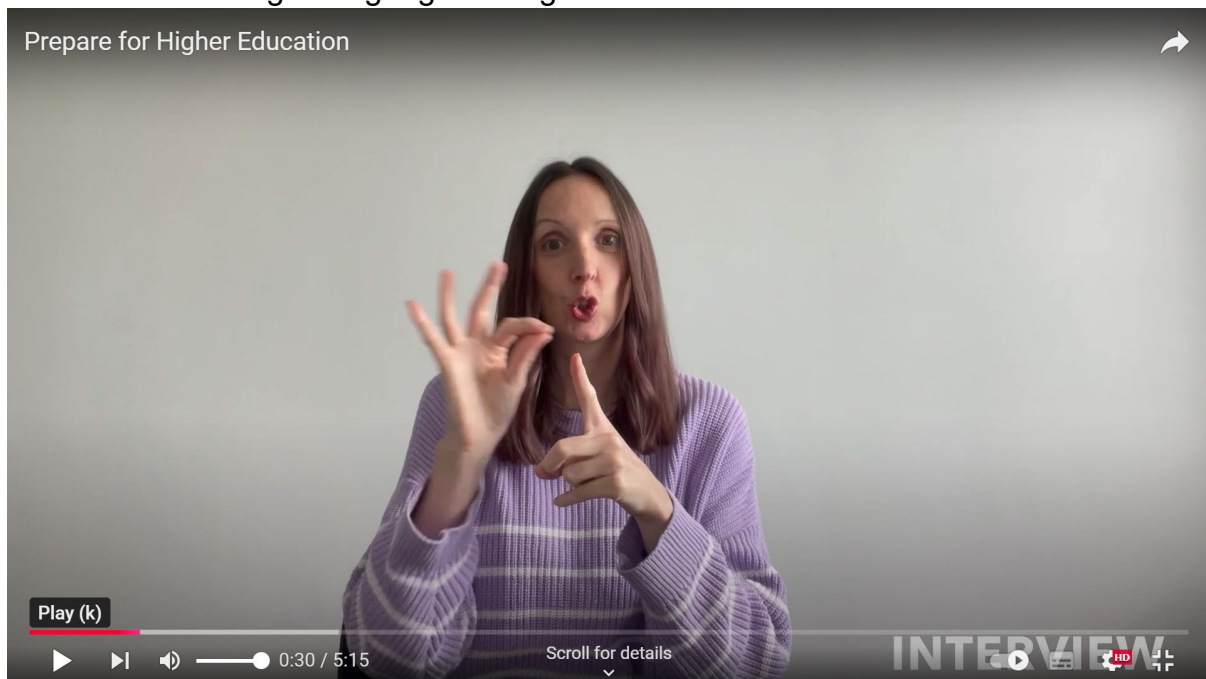
We will ensure that parents and family members have access to funded BSL courses.

What We Did

The Ayrshire Deaf Education Service provides free BSL 1:1 tuition to parents of Deaf children (home visits or sessions at nursery or at school).

The service manager of the [Ayrshire Deaf Education Service](#) and the BSL assistant, (who is a Deaf BSL user) set up a service YouTube channel. This channel provides BSL learning videos on a range of topics. Including the BSL alphabet, common key phrases and greetings, colours, weather, nursery rhymes and songs to name a few. Videos are added on a regular basis and families contact the service with requests for new content.

BSL Assistant – Sign Language for Higher Education screenshot



What We Said

We will establish an Ayrshire-wide Network for Deaf children and young people.

What We Did

The service manager of the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service, along with the BSL assistant, sits on the Hearing Impairment Network for Children and Young People network (HINCYP)*. The HINCYP is a national network that is funded by the Scottish Government to support children with severe and profound deafness. The Service Manager and BSL assistant officer created a video to introduce the HINCYP website to local people across Ayrshire – [BSL HINCYP Introduction video](#) which has had 175 views since its release. The Ayrshire Deaf Education Service support children with all levels of deafness, including mild, moderate, severe and profound.

Although there is potential scope to create an Ayrshire group, the service manager provides updates on the work going on in Ayrshire and is kept up to date with current developments in NHS Audiology. In addition, the manager acts as a voice for the Deaf children and young people from an education perspective.

*The Hearing Impairment Network for Children and Young People (HINCYP) was established in 2019, and its purpose is to support services and families to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in Scotland with bilateral severe or profound hearing loss through better access to high quality specialist care and support. It is hoped that children and young people with all levels of deafness will benefit from the establishment of this network.

What We Said

We will ensure that information on language options is available to children and their families from the point of diagnosis

What We Did

All families of newly diagnosed deaf babies are offered information about BSL and the benefits of BSL are promoted to the main caregivers. Families are supported by peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs), who continue to share all communication options and offer BSL tuition from a native BSL user. This starts for families who wish this support at the point of diagnosis and as the child develops.

School Education

We share the long-term goal for school education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child’s education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school.”

What We Said

We will ensure that parents and carers have access to information in an appropriate format.

What We Did

School teams provide support for Deaf Children who have Deaf parents. Employees who can sign in BSL interact and can sign to parents, however for formal meetings, interpreters are provided as required.

What We Said

We will ensure that interpreter support is available to enable children, young people, parents, and carers to participate in wider school activities such as Parent Council meetings, school trips, Team Around the Child (TAC), Case Conferences, Children’s Hearings and so on.

What We Did

As of November 2024, the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service supports approximately, 220 deaf pupils. For the Team Around the Child meetings and other events and activities, contact details for interpreters are provided to individual schools to be used as required.

What We Said

We will ensure that interpreter support is available for young people to access work placements, local careers and Further Education events.

What We Did

In the last decade, only a handful of Deaf pupils from Grange Academy have required the services of an interpreter to access work placements, local careers and further education events. Teachers of the Deaf have also supported Deaf pupils at events such as these for confidence and moral support. The school will continue to ensure that interpreter support is available to any Deaf pupils who require this service.

Due to challenges in booking official interpreters, the Teachers of the Deaf at Greenwood Academy often provide BSL interpretation for pupils at parents nights, school shows, and college interviews etc. External interpreters are used when available.

What We Said

We will further promote BSL for 1 + 2 languages within the school curriculum from early years.

What We Did

As part of the National Progression Award (NPA) in Health and Social Care curriculum, BSL Awareness is taught annually to the senior secondary school pupils within North Ayrshire who are enrolled on this course. The pupils are provided with a 90 minute session, covering the basics of BSL as part of the communication element of the course. The numbers attending varies each year, averaging between 10 – 15 pupils.

The Ayrshire Deaf Education Service have a Teacher of the Deaf and a BSL assistant who have worked with South Ayrshire Council 1+2 coordinator to develop a BSL pack which can be shared with North and East Ayrshire Councils. Ayrshire Deaf Education Service has provided BSL taster (twilight) sessions for early years staff and primary staff to demonstrate how BSL can be brought into the curriculum. They have also worked in two East Ayrshire schools to promote BSL as 1+2 option. This work will be on-going through each academic year.

What We Said

We will develop a partnership approach between education and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to better support deaf children and young people.

What We Did

To date, Grange Academy in Kilmarnock have had two Deaf pupils access CAMHS where support was given in partnership between the school and the service; This supported the provision of key background information to the service as required by CAMHS and support through transporting pupils to their appointments when parents were unavailable to do so. These pupils were not BSL users, but this does act as a model should the need for any of our Deaf pupils to access CAMHS with interpreter support in the future. Greenwood Academy has not yet needed to engage with CAMHS services using BSL and both schools recognise that having a specialist CAMHS deaf service would be beneficial and something that could be explored.

What We Said

We will work in collaboration with deaf young people to explore the possibility of establishing an Ayrshire youth club.

What We Did

A Deaf Youth Club was set up prior to Covid and is run by a number of volunteers at the Ayrshire Deaf Club (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in Crosshouse. The group meets every two weeks, with 20 children attending on average, with age ranges from three to 17 years. There is also a separate room where parents and carers can sit and chat.

The Club provides a range of activities for our young people and the activities always available include Xbox, colouring, dance games and pool, with food being provided half-way through the night. There are also seasonal activities, such as a recent fireworks display, Pudsey night and a trip to the Panto. The children attending enjoy participating in the club as it provides a structured activity out with school for deaf children to get together.

Post School Education

We share the long-term goal for post school education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“BSL users will be able to maximise their potential at school, will be supported to transition to post-school education if they wish to do so and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s).”

What We Said

We will develop links with appropriate partners to ensure that young people are tracked in relation to post-school destinations.

What We Did

Annual Deaf awareness training is provided by the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service to Ayrshire College and Bachelor of Education 4th Year Students at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). The service works closely with the British Deaf Association (BDA) and transports pupils to transition events in Glasgow.

The college is involved in the Further Education and Higher Education Sector BSL Group where discussion around BSL plans and sharing good practice takes place.

The college has continued to develop good links and articulation agreements with UWS, Glasgow Caledonian and other universities across Scotland, which helps to support students progressing from college to university.

The college tracks the number of students in post-college positive destinations through the college Leaver Destinations Survey. The information is collated by the Scottish Funding Council and shared with the sector.

The College works closely with Skills Development Scotland, schools and other partners across the three local authorities to support students to progress to and from college.

We are involved in the Sensory Impairment Operational group for Ayrshire where we share practice and guidance with key contacts from health and social care partnerships, NHS and teachers for the D/deaf.

What We Said

We will ensure college involvement with school transition meetings where appropriate.

What We Did

Ayrshire College continues to work collaboratively with schools and key contacts in the local authorities to ensure that student needs assessments and transition plans are agreed as early as possible. College staff attend transition meetings as required.

This allows the College to plan for support required, whether it be a Communication Support Worker or ensuring appropriate assistive technology is in place.

Case Study – Positive Destinations

The College supports a number of Deaf BSL students onto positive destinations; during the 2023/24 academic year a student progressed through college starting with an HNC in Art and Design, completing their HND and is now a student at the University of the West of Scotland studying the same subject.

A Deaf student is hoping to move into the trades next year after having the opportunity to work within this department at the College.

Another student has passed their level 5 in Hairdressing and is working towards level 6. The student has really excelled in this area and is currently working in the 'You Salon' at the college in Kilmarnock every Monday for work experience. Clients are specifically asking for this student to cut and style their hair. The student now has a dream of opening her own salon for the deaf as she will be able to communicate with clients in BSL.

A communication support worker from the College stated, "It is great to see children coming to college as young adults and progressing into further education. As a deaf student, our young people face lots of barriers and having a previous connection with us makes such a difference".

Training, Work and Social Security

We share the long-term goal for training and work set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish 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.”

What We Said

We will ensure regular meetings of the Transition Forum for BSL Users to support an easy transition from school to a positive destination.

What We Did

The Transition Forum has not met since before the Covid Pandemic in 2020. Grange Academy has continued to support Deaf pupils who use sign language for support to go onto positive destinations (especially college). The last, profoundly Deaf pupil who used BSL, left the Academy pre-covid where he was supported during interviews and college transition days etc. when he gained a college placement in his local town. The Academy continues to be involved in post school transitions with all of its Deaf pupils and works closely with partnership agencies to ensure inclusion, enabling pupils to reach their potential. This approach is also similar with deaf support for pupils at Greenwood Academy.

What We Said

We will promote Ayrshire Disability Inclusive Confident Employers (DICE) to staff as a resource for expert advice on initiatives such as ‘Access to Work’

What We Did

The DICE programme was originally started and hosted by local Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) offices to provide support and advice to local employers on employment issues relating to health and disability and included support with recruitment of staff, including additional information on Access to Work. This programme was promoted throughout the life of the plan, however due to several staffing changes is no longer active.

Employability Managers from North, South and East Ayrshire Councils along with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce have been planning the creation of a Disability Confident Group. This would operate Ayrshire wide with an aim to run an event each quarter to market, monitor and promote the Disability Confident approach to existing and new members. The group will offer information and advice and promote recruitment from within the disabled community.

Health (Including Social Care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

We share the long-term goal for health (including social care), mental health and wellbeing set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“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.”

What We Said

We will develop information, in collaboration with our deaf children and young people, regarding the importance of attending audiology appointments.

What We Did

Development of specific information for this has not progressed due to capacity within services. Families/carers are advised verbally by staff of the importance of continuation of attendance at appointments.

What We Said

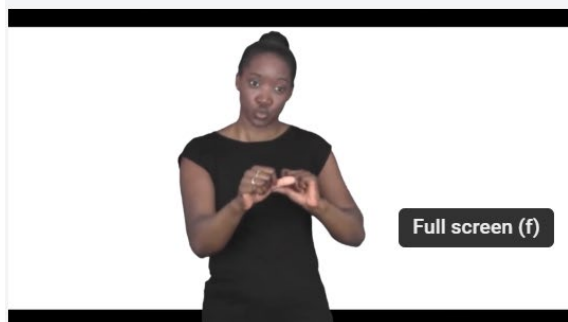
We will use social media to share information on available mental health support.

What We Did

All partners received communications from the British Deaf Association (BDA) and share appropriate information with the BSL community. NHS Ayrshire and Arran have further developed their public website page to include BSL clips on a variety of health issues including mental health ([Mental health and stress \(BSL\) - NHS Ayrshire and Arran](#)).

Examples of Mental Health videos in BSL -

Mental health and stress (BSL)



Breathing and relaxation exercises for stress



Generalised anxiety disorder

What We Said

We will provide palliative and end of life care information and care plans that are co-produced by Deaf people and deaf sector organisations.

What We Did

The My Anticipatory Care Plan was a national resource created by the Healthcare Improvement Service. However, translating into BSL was never undertaken. When palliative and end of life care information is required, it is provided through support of a BSL interpreter to allow two-way communication between patient and clinicians.

Transport

We share the long-term goal for transport set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

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

What We Said

We will explore technological solutions to support private transport providers to communicate with BSL users.

What We Did

A Pan-Ayrshire Equality Transport Summit was held in September 2024. The purpose of the summit was to bring together a range of transport providers to answer questions and issues from a wide variety of the public. Representatives from the BSL community participated in the event and were able to raise concerns around communication, especially when using the rail network. Network Rail highlighted new AI technology that complements the spoken announcements at stations. Information in real time is transferred via AI into BSL interpretation and although there is a slight delay, feedback from the deaf community has been positive and Network Rail are aiming to roll this out to a wider number of stations.

What We Said

We will ensure taxi providers licensing training incorporates BSL awareness.

What We Did

The partners considered this action but due to a range of factors were unable to take this forward.

Justice

We share the long-term goal for justice set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems in Scotland.”

What We Said

We will ensure appropriately trained BSL interpreters are available within Civil, Juvenile, and Criminal justice settings.

What We Did

The three Ayrshire Council areas all have processes in place to organise interpreters for anyone from the BSL community who is involved with Community Justice Services. East Ayrshire Council also has an in-house BSL interpreter, however none of the areas have had a request or identified a specific client need for BSL interpretation services over the last few years.

Democracy

We share the long-term goal for democracy set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“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.”

What We Said

We will ensure BSL training information provided by the Electoral Commission is cascaded to all relevant electoral staff.

What We Did

During election periods, Election staff are required to attend training on the election process. Awareness sessions highlight the process for supporting voters who have a disability or impairment who may require additional support. Links to the relevant Electoral Commission website regarding these issues are also included, so that staff are well-informed of their expectations when supporting voters on polling day.

What We Said

We will promote information on voting processes in appropriate formats.

What We Did

The Electoral Commission has a [British Sign Language \(BSL\) video on how to register to vote](#) and this is highlighted within the Registering to Vote section of Council webpages.

What We Said

We will promote the Access to Elected Office Fund (Scotland).

What We Did

This was made available on council websites when open and will be promoted at appropriate times to the BSL community through the newly established working group.

Ayrshire BSL Operational Plan 2024-2030

Strategic Aim	Action	Lead	Due By
1	Establish a BSL Local Plan Implementation Advisory Group with representation from the local BSL community.	Contact specialist groups and organisations for inclusion in the Implementation group.	Partner Organisations December 2024
2	By Autumn 2024, develop an operational plan through the BSL Local Plan Implementation Advisory Group to deliver the strategic aims.	We will develop a plan to ensure we are on track to meet our strategic aims in consultation with the local deaf community.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group December 2024
3	Follow guidance on inclusive communication from Scottish Government, when available, in line with the PSED review to ensure BSL users are considered in communications.	3 a. This will be implemented once the guidance is available from the Scottish Government 3 b. Within North Ayrshire Council explore the creation of a pilot for central interpretation and Translation funding, using the BSL Budget.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group We will review this in 2025 as guidance as has been delayed. December 2025 April 2025
4	Based on the Scottish Government guidance on BSL access for public engagement, adopt inclusive public engagement guidance.	This will be implemented once the guidance is available from the Scottish Government.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group We will review this in 2025 as guidance as has been delayed.
5	Publish a progress report on the actions in 2027, the midway point for this plan. As a living plan, this will enable us to reflect on what further actions are required to help us meet our longer-term goals and overall vision for BSL in Ayrshire.	To collate and publish an update report in both BSL and English.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group May 2027

Strategic Aim		Action	Lead	Due By
6	Develop a specific page on our public websites with information in BSL or signposting to relevant information available in BSL.	6a Members of the deaf community will be invited to review partner organisations webpages in relation to developing information in BSL.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	Annually over the lifetime of the plan.
		6b. Hold a BSL Engagement event to discuss organisation roles, technology and website information.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	May 2025.
7	Continue to engage with BSL users and promote Contact Scotland BSL.	7a. Organise planned sessions through the lifetime with members of the deaf community to promote Contact Scotland BSL so that all those who require the service are aware of the Contact Scotland BSL.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	Biennial over the lifetime of the plan.
		7b. Organise planned sessions through the lifetime of the plan with employees of the plan so that all staff are aware of the service.	Partner organisations.	Annually over the lifetime of the plan.
		7c. Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group will develop promotional material with FAQs.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	Over the lifetime of the plan.
8	Promote and utilise the Scottish Government Signport Portal for BSL/English interpreters	This will be promoted once available.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	Date will be set once available.

Strategic Aim	Action	Lead	Due By
9	Facilitate BSL users, deaf and deafblind children, and their families to access support.	<p>9a. Engaging with our children, young people and their families to ensure that they are aware of how to access BSL support when engaging with services.</p> <p>9b. Updating information on webpages through engaging with the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service.</p> <p>9c. Working with communication support workers via the student association to review information within Ayrshire College.</p> <p>9d. Promote information in primary care services.</p>	<p>Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.</p> <p>Review annually over the lifetime of the plan, as information constantly changes.</p>
10	Continue to promote BSL service provision to ensure staff understand the importance of BSL provision.	<p>10a. This will be promoted via events and campaigns such Deaf Awareness week.</p> <p>10b. BSL awareness sessions will be made available for employees.</p>	<p>Implementation Advisory Group.</p> <p>Sensory Impairment teams.</p> <p>Annually over the lifetime of the plan.</p>

Strategic Aim	Action	Lead	Due By
11	Support NHS teams and BSL providers to develop robust referral pathways which will result in BSL users, deaf and deafblind children accessing both the healthcare and language learning support they require.	NHS and local BSL community. NHS and local BSL community	May 2026.
12	Promote access to the Scottish Government opportunities for targeted workers to learn BSL up to an appropriate SCQF Level.	Partner Organisations. North Ayrshire Council/local authorities.	Annually over the lifetime of the plan. April 2025 and April 2026.
13	Signpost BSL users and their families to access the Scottish Government opportunities to gain experience about the heritage and culture of BSL, as well as hold local events.	Implementation Advisory group/Local Authority Community Teams. Partner organisations.	Annually over the lifetime of the plan. As and when available. 2026 and 2029.

Strategic Aim	Action	Lead	Due By
14	Promote and support implementation of the nationally identified solutions to specific barriers for BSL users to support an easy transition from school to positive destinations.	Once the nationally identified solutions to specific barriers for BSL users are available we will promote and support BSL users.	Partner organisations. As and when available.
15	Through No One Left Behind, deliver place-based employability services that support individuals to overcome structural barriers to entering and sustaining employment. We will work with the Implementation Advisory Group for this plan to identify solutions to specific barriers for BSL users accessing devolved employability support.	15a. Employability and Skills Team will work with individuals who use BSL to ensure that a tailored support plan is in place. 15b. Increase staff knowledge by offering access to specific BSL courses	Local Authorities and Ayrshire College. Local Authorities/ sensory impairment teams. Annually over the life of the plan. April 2026.
16	Promote opportunities for engagement and embed actions related to BSL users, based on the work set out within the social isolation and loneliness strategy.	Work with public sector partners to support the Scottish Government Social Isolation and Loneliness Strategy 2023 - 2026.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group. April 2026.

Strategic Aim	Action	Lead	Due By
17 Promote access to support services during the cancer journey.	17a. Engage with cancer services to understand what support services are available. 17b. Promote, using appropriate BSL communication, what support is available to the BSL community.	NHS Ayrshire and Arran.	May 2027.
18 Support BSL users to understand the use of the remote video BSL interpreting service.	Work with the deaf community in Ayrshire to deliver engagement sessions to showcase the use of the remote video BSL interpreting service	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	December 2025.
19 Work to help embed BSL further within culture and the arts including increasing availability of signed events and performances.	Work with respective teams leading on the culture and arts in each LA area to offer BSL events and performances annually. Promote local and national BSL events.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	January 2026.
20 Utilise the data from the Census and any other sources to better understand our local BSL population, as well as explore issues such as accessibility and access to services.	Undertake an analysis of census data and local data zones. Engage with the BSL community and the two local deaf clubs to better understand local need.	Partner Organisations Implementation Advisory Group.	May 2025 and thereafter annually.

Strategic Aim	Action	Lead	Due By
21	Publicise resources from the Electoral Commission, once available, to provide ongoing support for BSL users' participation in democratic life.	Make available on council websites and promoted during election periods.	South, North and East Ayrshire councils.
22	Ensure relevant electoral staff are aware of the need to provide appropriate information on voting processes to BSL users.	Provide awareness of voting processes for BSL users.	North, South and East Ayrshire councils.

South Ayrshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment including Fairer Scotland Duty

Section One: Policy Details*

Name of Policy	Ayrshire Shared BSL Action Plan 2024 – 2030
Lead Officer (Name/Position)	Elizabeth Dougall – Senior Policy Officer Community Planning & Equalities
Support Team (Names/Positions) including Critical Friend	Susan McCardie Co-ordinator, Performance and Community Planning Macy Biggar – Community Planning & Equalities Assistant (Critical Friend)

*The term Policy is used throughout the assessment to embrace the full range of policies, procedures, strategies, projects, applications for funding or financial decisions.

What are the main aims of the policy?	The aim of the BSL plan is to facilitate the promotion of BSL and to meet the Council's statutory obligation to have a plan in place before 6 th May 2024.
What are the intended outcomes of the policy?	<p>This BSL Local Plan sets out the priorities identified through consultation with BSL users living, working and studying in Ayrshire. The priorities included within this Plan cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering actions to support the implementation of the BSL National Plan • BSL Accessibility • Children, Young People and their Families • Access to Employment • Health and Wellbeing • Celebrating BSL Culture • BSL Data • Democratic Participation <p>It describes the high level actions the partners will take between 2024 and 2030 to enable BSL users to be involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens, and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.</p> <p>* Wherever we refer 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.</p>

Section Two: What are the Likely Impacts of the Policy?

Will the policy impact upon the whole population of South Ayrshire and/or	The proposed BSL Plan is designed to have a positive effect on BSL users; this means that people whose first or preferred language is BSL will be fully involved in daily and public life.
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particular groups within the population? (please specify)	
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Considering the following Protected Characteristics and themes, what likely impacts or issues does the policy have for the group or community?

List any likely positive and/or negative impacts.

Protected Characteristics	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
Age: Issues relating to different age groups e.g. older people or children and young people	Positive impact on children - to improve outcomes for deaf or deafblind children.
Disability: Issues relating to disabled people	Positive impact – The plan is intended to improve outcomes for deaf or deafblind people.
Gender Reassignment – Trans/Transgender: Issues relating to people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change his or her sex	Neither a direct positive nor negative impact
Marriage and Civil Partnership: Issues relating to people who are married or are in a civil partnership	Neither a direct positive nor negative impact
Pregnancy and Maternity: Issues relating to woman who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave	Neither a direct positive nor negative impact
Race: Issues relating to people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities, including Gypsy/Travellers	Neither a direct positive nor negative impact
Religion or Belief: Issues relating to a person's religion or belief (including non-belief)	Neither a direct positive nor negative impact
Sex: Issues specific to women and men/or girls and boys	Neither a direct positive nor negative impact
Sexual Orientation: Issues relating to a person's sexual orientation i.e., LGBT+, heterosexual/straight	Neither a direct positive nor negative impact

Equality and Diversity Themes Relevant to South Ayrshire Council	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
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<p>Health Issues and impacts affecting people's health</p>	<p>Positive impact – consideration has been given to the impact on the health of BSL users and improved access to health care and mental health services is a goal set out in this plan. In addition, improved access to education will increase opportunities for young people to become more involved and gain employment.</p>
<p>Human Rights: Issues and impacts affecting people's human rights such as being treated with dignity and respect, the right to education, the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to free elections.</p>	<p>Positive impact- the Plan aims to ensure parents are fully involved in their child's education and improving access to a wide range of information and public services in BSL.</p>

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Positive and/or Negative Impacts
<p>Low Income/Income Poverty: Issues: cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food and clothing.</p>	<p>The plan has no positive or negative impact.</p>
<p>Low and/or no wealth: Issues: enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future</p>	<p>The plan has no positive or negative impact.</p>
<p>Material Deprivation: Issues: being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies</p>	<p>The plan has no positive or negative impact.</p>
<p>Area Deprivation: Issues: where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)</p>	<p>The plan has no positive or negative impact.</p>

Section Three: Evidence Used in Developing the Policy

<p>Involvement and Consultation In assessing the impact(s) set out above what evidence has been collected from involvement, engagement or consultation? Who did you involve, when and how?</p>	<p>From the outset, representatives from the various partner organisations have taken steps to directly involve Deaf people from across Ayrshire in the development of this plan. This engagement with the BSL community was undertaken with appropriate BSL language interpreters to ensure clear two-way dialogue to assist us in capturing their views in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way. However, given the tight timescales this engagement was limited to ensure delivery by 6 May 2024 but we will continue to work with Deaf people and keep them up to date as the delivery of the plan progresses.</p> <p>Ayrshire is unusual in that there are no voluntary sector organisations of and for, Deaf people in the area, however, representation from the British Deaf Association (BDA) in Glasgow has been integral to taking this work forward.</p>
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	<p>We have engaged with representatives from the Ayrshire Society for the Deaf, Deaf Students from Ayrshire College, the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service and representatives from Elderbank Primary School , Grange Academy and Greenwood Academy. Key themes were identified that we have reflected in this plan's actions.</p> <p>Representatives from the various partner organisations also attended an event in Glasgow in November 2023 where the national plan and associated actions were discussed.</p>
<p>Data and Research In assessing the impact set out above what evidence has been collected from research or other data. Please specify what research was carried out or data collected, when and how this was done.</p>	<p>Led by Ayrshire Equality Partnership further research will be carried out as part of the development of the operational plan.</p>
<p>Partners data and research In assessing the impact(s) set out in Section 2 what evidence has been provided by partners? Please specify partners</p>	<p>Ayrshire Equality Partnership</p>
<p>Gaps and Uncertainties Have you identified any gaps or uncertainties in your understanding of the issues or impacts that need to be explored further?</p>	<p>No</p>

Section Four: Detailed Action Plan to address identified gaps in:

- a) evidence and
- b) to mitigate negative impacts

No.	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
1	n/a		

Section Five - Performance monitoring and reporting

Considering the policy as a whole, including its equality and diversity implications:

When is the policy intended to come into effect?	6 th May 2024
When will the policy be reviewed?	An annual update will be provided.
Which Panel will have oversight of the policy?	Cabinet.

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Section 6


Summary Equality Impact Assessment Implications & Mitigating Actions

Name of Policy: Ayrshire Shared BSL Action Plan 2024 – 2030

This policy will assist or inhibit the Council’s ability to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations as follows:

<p>Eliminate discrimination</p> <p>The plan is designed to provide appropriate support for deaf and deafblind people.</p>
<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>The plan is fully in line with the National BSL Plan.</p>
<p>Foster good relations</p> <p>Improving and increasing the range and availability of communication methods across partners.</p>
<p>Consider Socio-Economic Disadvantage (Fairer Scotland Duty)</p> <p>No positive or negative impact.</p>

Summary of Key Action to Mitigate Negative Impacts	
Actions	Timescale
n/a	
n/a	


Signed: **Service Lead:** Kevin Anderson
Date: 7/3/24