



NHS Grampian

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

2024 – 2030

The NHS Grampian BSL Plan represents our actions and commitment to promote and facilitate the use and understanding of BSL in Scotland. It supports Scotland's National Plan to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL signers to live, work, visit and learn.

April 2024

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1 Introduction

The Scottish Government aims to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL User to live, work, visit and learn. BSL Users refer to people who are D/deaf and/or Deafblind whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL).

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 came into force in October 2015. The Act promotes the use of BSL in Scotland, primarily by requiring public bodies in Scotland to develop BSL plans that outline how they will promote and raise awareness of the language. The local plan must demonstrate how they will work towards implementing the national plan and improving services for BSL Users throughout the region.

The first National British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2017-2023 was published in October 2017. The National Plan is made up of ten long-term goals covering early years and education; training and work; health, mental health and well bring; transport; culture and arts; justice and democracy. It also described 70 actions to make progress towards these goals.

The second [National British Sign Language \(BSL\) Plan 2023-2029](#) was published in November 2023. It is a six-year plan that represents the ongoing commitment to making Scotland the best place in the world for BSL Users to live, work, visit and learn. It focuses on ten priority areas with emphasis on children, young people and their families, health and well-being, celebrating deaf culture and tackling accessibility for BSL Users that impacts on a number of areas such as transport, democratic participation and access to justice. The delivery of these actions will lead to improved equality, opportunities and outcomes for BSL Users.

The NHS Grampian BSL Plan 2024-2030 represents our intent to promote and facilitate the use and understanding of BSL in Scotland. Actions will take into account local circumstances and consider how best to respond to BSL Users' needs within local communities and services.

2 NHS Grampian Plan for the Future

NHS Grampian's [Plan for the Future 2022-2028](#) is the Health Board's strategic plan for enabling wellness as well as treating illness. One of its priority areas is People. We plan to invest time and effort into creating a different conversation and relationship with the people of Grampian to ensure we provide timely access to healthcare, develop sustainable health and care services for the future, improve population health and reduce inequalities.

People's health and wellbeing is better when they are actively engaged in decisions about their health and care. So NHS Grampian [engaged](#) with a range of audiences, including BSL Users, to help us understand what is important to them when it comes to health and wellbeing and inform our Plan for the Future.

3 BSL Users in Grampian

NHS Grampian serves the population in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. There is no current data available to show the number of Deaf BSL Users in Grampian. At the time of writing (April 2024) the relevant Scotland Census 2022 response to the questions "Can you use

British Sign Language?” and “What is your main language?” has not yet been published.

However, NHS Grampian interpreting records are a partial indicator and show that, from April 2022 to March 2023, there were 150 primary appointments (including GP, dental, optician, and vaccination) attended by 28 Deaf BSL Users. There were also 297 hospital appointments attended by 56 Deaf BSL Users. However, it should be noted that not all BSL Users request a BSL/English interpreter when they attend healthcare appointments.

4 Engagement and consultation

The first consultation event with BSL Users to support the development of this plan was held on January 13, 2024 in the North East Sensory Services in Aberdeen. It was hosted by British Deaf Association and Aberdeen Deaf Club and attended by over 30 BSL Users, most of whom lived in Aberdeen City.

Further engagement and consultation events then took place in Aberdeen City and Moray, supported by a variety of digital engagement opportunities to ensure all citizens were able to participate if they chose to.

Their contribution informed the development of a draft BSL Plan, which was then made available on the NHS Grampian website and via social media, accompanied by an online questionnaire.

NHS Grampian staff also provided their feedback via the questionnaire, as well as through online and face-to-face meetings.

Consultation activity on the draft BSL Plan was carried out from February 5 to March 4, 2024. All responses, issues raised and suggestions were then reviewed and taken into consideration in the creation of this BSL Plan.

Feedback received from BSL Users reflected a broadly positive experience of healthcare, including good quality and availability of BSL interpreters.

5 NHS Grampian BSL Plan 2024-2030

The actions below set out the practical steps NHS Grampian intends to take in partnership with its staff, BSL Users and the wider Deaf community, as well as relevant partner organisations. In order to support clear accountability and reporting, work will now be undertaken to understand the baselines we are working from in order to set meaningful targets and timeframes for each activity.

This will support ongoing reporting, provide clear accountability and ensures deliverables are time bound. A progress report will then be produced in 2027, the midway point for this 'living plan', which will enable reflection and learning from what has been achieved and what further actions are required to meet the longer-term goals and overall vision for BSL in Scotland.

The goals with asterisks (*) are aligned with the priorities of the National BSL Plan 2023-2029.

5.1 BSL Accessibility*

Long-term goal: 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.

Our Actions:

1. Promotion of the BSL interpreter booking process for both staff and patients to raise awareness of the availability of BSL interpreters to users attending healthcare appointments.
2. Production of an instructional BSL video showing how to access a BSL/English interpreter.
3. Signposting BSL Users to health information available in BSL, such as NHS Inform and NHS24
4. Promotion of the free online relay interpreter service Contact Scotland BSL Service, Relay UK service, Emergency SMS etc.
5. Creation of a dedicated BSL Plan webpage on the NHS Grampian website nhsgrampian.org
6. Promotion of SignLive (online BSL video interpreter) in A&E at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and Dr Gray's. Raising awareness to other services of how to access SignLive.
7. Promotion of Near Me/Attend Anywhere video consultation.
8. NHS Grampian will work together with Deaf Community in the production of BSL health-related videos across a broader range of topics requested by patients/BSL Users and promote their availability on social media platforms and websites.
9. Raise awareness levels of the availability of equipment and technology such as Crescendo 50 (personal amplifier), Microsoft 365 Audio transcription, among staff and patients, as well as how it can be requested/accessed.
10. Promote the use of sensory signage for In-Patients to staff and patients.
11. Support requests from services wishing to make them more accessible to BSL Users (i.e. provision of alternative method of communication such as email, letters in simple English).

5.2 Health and Wellbeing*

Long-term goal: 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.

Our Actions:

12. Establish a BSL Community Health Group who can support and advise NHS Grampian on the main issues and concerns for BSL Users when accessing healthcare services.
13. Make healthcare services and patients aware of the availability of BSL interpreting services (via attendance at face-to-face appointments or via Near Me/Attend Anywhere).
14. Distribution of the “I am Deaf” card to Deaf Communities in Grampian, professionals/staff and partner agencies.
15. Involve and engage BSL Users in the development and implementation of health services through our ‘Putting People First’ approach and activities
16. Raise awareness of the availability of Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf People.
17. Raise awareness on how to give complaints or feedback (i.e. NHS Grampian, Care Opinion) and provide timely support for services seeking to improve patient experiences for BSL Users.
18. Improve accessibility of Audiology services to service users such as Deaf BSL User.
19. Continue to provide BSL supported scheduled vaccinations.
20. Educate staff on the needs of service users with Hearing or Assistance Dogs and how to support them when accessing NHS premises.
21. Support staff in creating innovative BSL communication tools for patients such as commonly used words or phrases.

5.3 Access to Employment*

Long-term goal: 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.

Our Actions:

22. Support BSL Users in workplace as part of NHS Grampian's recruitment, retention and development of its workforce. Signpost to 'Access to Work' scheme and supporting staff and managers on reasonable adjustments in the workplace.
23. Support students and trainees who are BSL Users during their placements in NHS Grampian. NHS Grampian will work with the educational establishments to identify solutions to specific barriers.

5.4 Staff Development

Our commitment to provide high quality, safe, effective and person-centred health services is core to achieve the best outcome for everyone living in Grampian. NHS Grampian will equip its staff with relevant skills, knowledge, training and development to deliver the required standards of their role.

Our Actions:

24. Offering basic BSL classes to NHS Grampian staff.
25. Promotion of relevant eLearning modules available to staff on Turas such as Deaf Awareness.
26. Offering Deaf Awareness Training for staff.
27. Raising awareness of best practices for working with BSL/English interpreters among staff.
28. Establish a group of NHSG Staff BSL Champions who will promote and guide colleagues on how to access support and

resources to help. BSL Users. The Staff BSL champions will undergo training to fulfil this role.

5.5 Celebrating BSL Culture*

Culture can improve the life chances and outcomes for all people at every stage in their life. To recognise that BSL and deaf culture are integral to the culture of the entire organisation.

Our Actions:

29. Promotion of Deaf Awareness Week – raising awareness, celebrating relevant work and contributions of staff.
30. Engaging with Deaf BSL Users and external partner organisations when seeking to ‘understand’ culture and health.

5.6 BSL Data*

Long-term goal: To strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community in Scotland to better inform decision making in public policy and service design.

Our Actions:

31. Improve NHS Grampian data collection with BSL interpreters to map the BSL Users accessing healthcare and number of appointments.
32. Improve recording of language and communication support of patients on patient management systems

5.7 Transport*

Long-term goal: BSL Users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland.

Our Action:

33. Raise awareness of patient transport services and THInC (Transport to Healthcare Information Centre for the NHS Grampian area), which provides advice on travelling to health or social care appointments.

5.8 Matters important to BSL Users

The development of this plan has been informed by the areas BSL Users advised us are important to them and they believe will improve equality, opportunities and outcomes.

During our consultation activity, the following themes were raised, which have been incorporated into the actions described throughout this document.

Themes:

- Explore how access to Wi-Fi in hospitals could improve the patient experience for BSL Users.
- Share good practice to reduce barriers for BSL Users - including improved access to buildings, communication with receptionists/front line staff, in waiting area experience and obtaining laboratory results.
- Increase awareness among staff of the needs of BSL Users, their communication needs, preferences and alternative communication systems.
- Support BSL Users in booking appointments and helping them to understand letters.

6 Contact Information

If you would like more information about this Plan, please contact:

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British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via:

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