

SHRC

Scottish
Human Rights
Commission

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-30

0131 297 5750 | hello@scottishhumanrights.com | www.scottishhumanrights.com |     

Scottish Human Rights Commission, Bridgeside House, 99 McDonald Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4NS

Contents

About the Commission.....	3
Our values.....	4
Foreword	5
How this plan was developed.....	6
BSL Plan 2024-30.....	7
BSL Accessibility	8
Our commitment	8
Our actions	8
Access to Employment.....	10
Our commitment	10
Our actions	10
Democratic Participation	12
Our commitment	12
Our actions	12
Review of the 2018-24 plan	14

About the Commission

The Scottish Human Rights Commission (the Commission) is a public body created by the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006, to protect and promote the human rights of all people in Scotland.

We are Scotland's human rights watchdog. Our job is to work with people and communities to understand their experiences, hold public bodies to account and help them to do better.

Our vision is fairer Scotland where human rights are respected, understood, and where there is justice when things go wrong.

The Commission is also part of the international human rights system. We are accredited by the United Nations as its trusted organisation to provide impartial evidence on human rights in Scotland.

Our values

We are accessible

We involve people in the work of the Commission on issues that affect their rights, and ensure our work is understood by all.

We are independent

We hold duty bearers to account by monitoring human rights standards in Scotland, the system of accountability, and using our mandate to take action where required. We are accountable to the people of Scotland.

We uphold everyone's human rights

Human rights belong to everyone. We recognise where bias, discrimination and power dynamics have an impact on human rights violations, and we take action on rights and groups most at risk.

We educate and engage

We help everyone to understand their human rights and make sure that decision makers are fully supported to develop policy and practice which affect people's rights.

We are authoritative, expert and trusted

We keep watch over national and international human rights law to help duty bearers understand the impact of their plans and actions on their human rights obligations, ensuring that this is rooted in rule of law, and easily understood

Foreword

Human rights belong to all of us, and the Scottish Human Rights Commission is responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of everyone in Scotland.

We are pleased to publish the Scottish Human Rights Commission's second BSL Plan, which sets out how, over the next six years, the Commission will work towards a Scotland where all BSL users are empowered to name and claim their human rights.

BSL is a vibrant language, integral to the lives of many people in Scotland. BSL has its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary, and is the first language of many Deaf and Deafblind people in Scotland.

In this plan, when we describe BSL users we mean everyone whose first or preferred language is BSL, including those who use the tactile form of the language.

The Commission's [Strategic Plan 2024-28](#) sets out clearly our commitment to increasing accessibility and participation in the Commission's work. This BSL Plan will play an important role in making that a reality. The plan is available to read on our website at www.scottishhumanrights.com.

In our Strategic Plan, we have said we will monitor how human rights are being experienced in Scotland, particularly focusing on those whose rights are most at risk. We will also continue to raise issues with the United Nations treaty bodies, including on the rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which are particularly relevant to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

We look forward to continued engagement with BSL users as we develop and deliver the commitments identified in this Plan.

How this plan was developed

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 requires certain public bodies, including the Scottish Human Rights Commission, to develop a BSL plan every six years.

BSL Plans aim to improve access to information and services for BSL users. This Plan is our second, and it reflects on progress from our previous [BSL Plan 2018-24](#), as well as setting out actions we will take between 2024 and 2030 to promote the use of BSL in our work, improve access to information and services for BSL users and improve involvement of BSL users in our work. [This Plan is also available in BSL on our YouTube channel.](#)

This Plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the Scottish Government's [BSL National Plan 2023-2029](#), where these are most relevant to the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

The Commission consulted with BSL users to develop this plan. We would like to thank everyone who contributed, including the British Deaf Association and Deaf Action Scotland.

The Commission is committed to continuing to engage with BSL users when it comes to implementing the actions identified in this plan, and to gathering feedback on our progress. Please contact us if you have any questions or comments.

BSL users can contact us using their preferred method of communication including video message, video relay via [Contact Scotland BSL](#), or email us on hello@scottishhumanrights.com.

BSL Plan 2024-30

This plan sets out how we will promote the use of BSL in the Commission's work.

We have aligned our commitments to the key priority areas outlined in the [Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2023-29](#) which are most relevant to the Commission, including:

- BSL Accessibility
- Access to Employment
- Democratic Participation

On the advice of Deaf-led organisations, we have broken down our strategy for achieving each commitment into short-term, medium-term and long-term actions.

We will also publish annual progress updates on our BSL Plan on our website at www.scottishhumanrights.com.

BSL Accessibility

We share the long-term goal for Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan:

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, using technology and increasing people's awareness of communication tools.

Our commitment

To remove barriers for BSL users to access information we produce about human rights and the Commission's work wherever possible and practicable.

To achieve this, we will:

- Engage with BSL users to enhance our understanding of accessibility gaps.
- Explore new avenues for reaching BSL users. For example, partnership work with Deaf-led civil society organisations, attending Deaf-led in-person events, through Deaf-led stakeholder channels.
- Increase resources available in BSL, for example, on our website and YouTube channel.
- Raise awareness of communication tools such as Contact Scotland BSL.

Our actions

By 2025 we will:

- Reach out to Deaf-led organisations to explore partnership work.
- Create a mailing list of deaf-led organisations to promote new resources directly to BSL users.

- Attend events held by Deaf-led organisations to learn more and to raise awareness of human rights and the Commission's work.
- Create a dedicated BSL page on our website.

By 2027:

- Consult BSL users during our next website build.
- Develop more communications strategies which highlight BSL accessibility, including digital strategy.

By 2030:

- Make as many new website publications as possible available in BSL.
- Explore the development of our BSL website content, in consultation with BSL users.
- Consult with BSL users to record our progress on accessibility and to find out where there may still be gaps, which we will address in our third BSL Plan.

Access to Employment

We share the long-term goal for Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan:

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 commitment

To become a BSL-friendly employer and workplace.

To achieve this, we will:

- Raise awareness about BSL and the BSL Plan within the Commission
- Consult with BSL users on creating a supportive workplace and accessible recruitment practices.

Our actions

By 2025 we will:

- Establish a BSL taskforce, responsible for progressing actions in the BSL Plan
- Establish a recurring BSL awareness training schedule for our staff and Members of the Commission
- Propose a BSL Plan working group with other public bodies, to share best practice and learn from each other.

By 2027:

- Introduce BSL awareness into staff inductions

- Conduct a review of workplace infrastructure to identify changes required to become a BSL-friendly employer
- Promote vacancies in BSL

By 2030:

- Support colleagues to learn BSL
- Consult with BSL users to record our progress on access to employment and to find out where there may still be gaps, which we will address in our third BSL Plan.

Democratic Participation

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services 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.

Our commitment

To identify, engage and support BSL users to participate meaningfully in our work.

This will include in:

- Participation work with rights holders
- Policy development
- Public consultation exercises such as events and surveys.

Our actions

By 2025 we will:

- Consult Deaf-led organisations to identify the best channels to reach BSL users.
- Make surveys and other public engagement exercises available in BSL.

By 2027:

- Work with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to produce information about senior appointments in BSL.
- Provide BSL support for participation opportunities.
- Establish a Participation Strategy which gives specific consideration to BSL users.

By 2030:

- Partner with Deaf-led organisations to research BSL users' experiences of human rights and publish any resulting reports.
- Consult with BSL users to record our progress on participation and to find out where there may still be gaps, which we will address in our third BSL Plan.

Review of the 2018-24 plan

In the period since our last BSL Plan was developed, the Commission has undergone a transition towards engaging more people in communities across Scotland in our work, so that everything we do is informed by people's direct experience of human rights issues.

As we move forward, we will work with BSL users and Deaf-led organisations to learn more about how we can improve and deliver on our commitment to promote and protect their human rights. While we have made some progress, there is more we can do. For example, our previous BSL Plan said we would research how we engage with BSL users and promote recruitment in BSL. In these areas we need to do more and have established specific goals for 2024-30.

The plan also included commitments to support BSL users to participate in the Commission's work; to establish staff training; and to make our work available in BSL wherever possible.

We have taken steps forward in these areas, offering BSL interpretation at public events and promoting recruitment for the [SNAP Leadership Panel with a five-part series available in BSL](#). We also introduced a link to Contact Scotland BSL to email signatures and undertook BSL awareness training. In our new plan, we have developed further action points on participation, staff training and making content available in BSL.

Currently, there are nearly 30 resources about human rights available in BSL on our YouTube channel. For example, we have published a series on individual rights, including the [rights to health](#), [housing](#), [independent living](#) and [social care](#).

To find out more about our BSL content, please visit our website www.scottishhumanrights.com and our YouTube channel [@ScottishHumanRights](#).