

SPICe Briefing

British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill

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The British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 29 October 2014. This member's bill was introduced by Mark Griffin MSP. Its purpose is to promote the use of British Sign Language including making provision for the preparation and publication of a British Sign Language National Plan for Scotland and requiring certain public authorities to prepare and publish their own British Sign Language Plans in connection with the exercise of their functions. It also requires these plans to be reviewed and updated at specified times in the political cycle. This Bill briefing sets out the background to the Bill, highlights the main proposals in the Bill and looks at some of the key issues raised to date regarding the focus of this proposed legislation.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill (“the Bill) is a Members’ Bill introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 29 October 2014 by Mark Griffin, MSP. The central purpose of the BSL Bill is to promote the use of BSL principally by requiring BSL plans to be prepared and published by the Scottish Ministers and the 116 public authorities listed at Schedule 2 of the Bill. The national plan and listed authority plans are required to be reviewed and new plans published on a four year timeline.

This approach is intended to increase the profile of the language and, with this, its use in delivery of services. The Bill does not go as far as imposing an explicit statutory requirement on authorities to provide British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters or translation services, nor does it require listed authorities to deliver specific services to BSL users or those wishing to learn BSL. The Bill also does not extend to other minority languages, or to other forms of communication that may be required by people with deafness or hearing difficulties. The view is that legislation is required to give the Scottish Government an opportunity to act on its commitment to recognise and support BSL as a minority language (Griffin, 2012).

At present the main mechanism available to deaf people to access sign language comes through disability provisions set out in the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act 2010 establishes a duty to offer disabled people “reasonable adjustments” when engaging in education, employment and when accessing services. Providing interpretation is one mechanism for communication support that could be called on in meeting this reasonable adjustment requirement.

In line with the view that BSL should be on a similar footing to Gaelic in Scotland, the intention in bringing forward this Bill is to recognise BSL as an indigenous manual language used by Deaf people, rather than as an impairment requiring communication support. As such, the BSL Bill follows a similar approach to that used in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which requires relevant public authorities to produce Gaelic Language Plans, and for these to be reviewed on a regular basis. While the Gaelic legislation establishes a body to manage the planning and review process, in the BSL Bill this activity is the responsibility of Scottish Ministers.

A small number of other countries have brought forward legislation on sign language, although there are also a number of countries that have recognised sign language through specific provisions such as access to education or through disability-focused legislation. In the UK, BSL has been recognised as a minority language since 2003, with various measures being pursued to increase recognition and attention to BSL. However, barriers to accessing services, employment and education for BSL users remain.

Mark Griffin conducted a consultation on the draft proposal for a BSL Bill in 2012. The consultation received 222 responses, one of which was a petition with 937 signatures. A significant proportion of those who responded were supportive of the aims of the proposed BSL Bill, and the majority of respondents agreed that legislation was required to achieve these aims. Many respondents cited the importance of recognising that BSL is, for some Deaf people, the first, and perhaps only, language used. It also has cultural significance to many Deaf people.

The Scottish Government has noted its support for the principles of the BSL Bill. It does, however, note a number of areas where changes to the Bill could be considered by the Member who introduced the Bill. The first is in relation to the amount of attention given to the process of producing and publishing plans, which risks most resources going on this activity at the expense of improving services. There is also concern about the potential consultation fatigue that could impact on BSL users and those who represent them. Finally, the timetable for publication of plans, etc. is cited as being “quite complex”. Proposals for amendments to the Bill to address these challenges are put forward in the Scottish Government Memorandum (Scottish Government, 2014).

The cost of implementing the provisions set out in the BSL Bill is estimated in the Financial Memorandum accompanying the Bill (Scottish Parliament, 2014c) as between £2.38 million and £3.59 million in the first Parliamentary session (2016 to 2020). In subsequent Parliamentary sessions the cost is estimated to be between £1.21 million and £2.4 million. These totals do not include the cost of: translating the National Plan and authority plans into BSL; supporting an advisory group to assist the Scottish Ministers; or continued investment in a national shared system for online interpreting (Scottish Government, 2014). There may also be costs associated with supporting public authorities to produce BSL plans, as well as to monitor and review BSL plans, which have not been calculated in the Financial Memorandum.

Including translating BSL plans into BSL, the Scottish Government estimate that, in the first Parliamentary session, the cost of implementing the provisions in the BSL Bill as approximately £6 million (Scottish Government, 2014).

INTRODUCTION

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill (“the Bill”) is a Members’ Bill that was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 29 October 2014 by Mark Griffith, MSP. The Parliament has agreed that the Education and Culture Committee will be the lead Committee during the passage of this bill.

A draft proposal for a bill to promote the use of British Sign Language (BSL) by requiring the Scottish Ministers and relevant public authorities to prepare and publish BSL plans was lodged with the Parliament on 27 July 2012 (Griffin, 2012). The document highlighted a lack of awareness and understanding of BSL among the hearing population, meaning that many Deaf people do not have access to the same information and services as hearing people.

The proposal noted that BSL is the indigenous manual language of Deaf people in Scotland, in the same way that English is the indigenous spoken language for people without hearing loss. Deaf people are recognised as being part of a cultural and linguistic minority. However, unlike those who speak other minority languages, there are some Deaf BSL users who cannot learn to speak English as they cannot hear the language. Given this, the focus of the proposed BSL Bill was on promotion of BSL within public services in order to improve access to information and services.

The proposal for a BSL Bill put forward in 2012 included the following provisions:

- Designation of a lead Minister for BSL.
- The Scottish Ministers developing a BSL strategic plan detailing action to promote BSL within the areas of Scottish Government responsibility.
- Relevant public authorities publishing action plans on the measures they are taking.
- The Scottish Ministers reporting to the Parliament twice during each Parliamentary session. The first report on the content of strategic plans and the second on performance of public authorities against these plans.
- The Scottish Ministers producing guidance for public authorities on what should be contained in their action plans.

The proposal also stated a hope that an advisory group be established, including BSL users and others with an understanding of the language, to advise and assist the designated Scottish Minister (Griffin, 2012).

The consultation on the draft proposal closed on 7 November 2012. In total 222 responses were received: 49 from organisations; 172 from individuals and one petition. The petition supporting the aims of the Bill had 937 signatures (Scottish Parliament and Griffin, 2013). The final proposal was lodged on 6 June 2013 with cross party support from 43 MSPs, leading to the right to introduce this Bill being secured.

In 2010 then Labour MSP Cathie Craigie put forward a proposal for a bill on BSL. It focused on securing the status of BSL as an official language. It also proposed equal access to services and the prevention of discrimination “on the grounds of disability or language”; making links with current equal opportunities legislation. Cathie Craigie’s Bill was formally lodged in March 2011. It fell at dissolution of the Parliament in May 2011.

Mark Griffith's Bill shifts the focus from services provision for deaf¹ people to promoting BSL as a language. In his consultation, Mark Griffith stated that he does not consider equalities legislation to be the correct mechanism to secure increased provision for BSL. Rather, the focus of the Bill is on cultural change, including increased opportunities to use BSL. The intention is to highlight that BSL users are a linguistic minority rather than disabled people in need of adjustments to mainstream services. In bringing forward this legislation, the intention is for BSL to be placed on a similar statutory footing to Gaelic.

BACKGROUND

Equality Act 2010

The main mechanism currently available to support deaf people in the UK comes through the disability provisions in the Equality Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act"). A person is protected under the disability provisions in the 2010 Act if she/he has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Within the terms of the 2010 Act, a deaf person would generally be protected under disability provisions as deafness is seen as a communication difficulty.

The 2010 Act establishes a duty to offer disabled people "reasonable adjustments"² when engaging in education, employment and when accessing services. The steps that count as a "reasonable" adjustment are not set out in statute. Rather the focus is on addressing any disadvantage faced by a disabled person that may result from the way that a public service, employer etc. usually operates. This can be done by adjusting or adapting provision to better meet the disabled person's needs. In the case of deaf people, the need for communication support to access services or engage in education or employment would generally require an adjustment or adaptation to be put in place either offering interpreting services or other forms of communication support.

The 2010 Act also offers protections where someone faces less favourable treatment as a result of race, colour or nationality (including citizenship), and ethnic or national origin. However, these provisions do not explicitly include recognition of discrimination on the basis of language. The main mechanism where language is recognised through these provisions is where someone from an ethnic minority does not speak sufficient English to access services. One response to this would be to offer translation of information into relevant minority languages or provision of an interpreter when engaging with services.

Deaf BSL users see British Sign Language as a minority language rather than an impairment that requires communication support:

"Deaf BSL users consider themselves a distinct language group and not disabled. They have a unique culture, history and life experience as a language minority and feel that action to improve their inclusion in society should be based on exactly the same language

¹ The term "deaf" is used to refer to a range of people including those who are: Deaf; deafened; deafblind; or hard of hearing. The capitalised "Deaf" is used by those whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL) who have a strong deaf cultural identity.

² There are limits on reasonable adjustments. First, the steps taken should not fundamentally alter the nature of the service, trade or profession. Second, where exercising a public function, the adjustment should not involve action that the organisation or individual does not have statutory powers to take.

approach to other groups, such as speakers of Gaelic or of Welsh.” (Scottish Government, 2009)

Some deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people do not consider themselves part of a language minority (often as they have acquired hearing loss in later life) so accept that disability legislation offers a mechanism for communication support to be put in place. In this situation, equalities legislation is viewed as offering a useful mechanism to challenge and redress some of the communication barriers and disadvantages that are experienced by deaf people (Scottish Government, 2009). In essence, those who call for communication support to be put in place when engaging with services, education or employers start from the position that hearing loss is an impairment that needs reasonable adjustment. For Deaf people, as a cultural group, the view is that BSL is their first language, which should be recognised by employers, education and other service providers.

Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

In several important ways, the provisions in the BSL Bill take a similar approach to the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 (“the 2005 Act”):

“The proposed Bill is based, in many respects, on the model of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which also includes a strategy for promoting, and facilitating the promotion of the use and understanding of a language.” (Griffin, 2012)

The 2005 Act established Bòrd na Gàidhlig (“the Bòrd”) as a statutory body with responsibility for promoting the use and understanding of the Gaelic language, promoting and advising on Gaelic language, culture and education and reporting to the Scottish Ministers on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in relation to the Gaelic language.

The 2005 Act builds on measures already in place to promote Gaelic and other minority languages, including the UN Declaration of the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic minorities (1992); the Council of Europe’s European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and the Framework Convention of the Protection of National Minorities (1995). These measures are intended to recognise and promote minority languages. For example, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (“the Charter”) aims to protect and promote the use of regional and minority languages (Council of Europe, 1992). The Charter only applies to languages traditionally used by nationals of the member state where these differ significantly from the official or majority language of the state. In promoting regional and minority languages the intention is to:

- ❖ recognise cultural diversity;
- ❖ safeguard recognised regional and minority languages;
- ❖ encourage use of these languages in speech and writing in both public and private life;
- ❖ provide means for teaching and study of these language(s) at all appropriate stages;
- ❖ provide facilities to enable non-speakers to learn; and
- ❖ promote study and research on regional and minority languages within higher education institutions.

The Bòrd's activities include:

- Producing a national Gaelic plan (the first within twelve months of the commencement of the Act and then every five years after that) setting out a strategy for promoting, and facilitating the promotion of, Gaelic education and Gaelic culture, and the use and understanding of the Gaelic language.
- In production of the national Gaelic plan, first publishing and consulting on a draft plan. The Bòrd must allow at least 3 months for the submission of views and take into account any views submitted in that period. The Bòrd is required to consult the Parliament in preparing the plan.
- Issuing notices to relevant public authorities requiring them to prepare a Gaelic language plan, including information on what the plan must contain, the issues the public authority must have regard to and a requirement on public authorities to consult with persons who have an interest in the plan being prepared.
- Approval of Gaelic plans, including powers to suggest modifications to proposed plans prior to approval, and monitoring the implementation of Gaelic plans.
- Issuing guidance on the development of Gaelic language plans.
- Issuing guidance in relation to Gaelic education.

It also makes provision for review of Gaelic language plans. Relevant public authorities with Gaelic language plan are required to review that plan within five years and make any necessary amendments to the plan as a result of this review. The plan must then be submitted to the Bòrd, amended or unamended.

The 2005 Act did not list which public authorities should produce a Gaelic language plan. Rather, the Bòrd has authority to decide which public authorities to serve notice on. The reasons for issuing a notice can include: (1) where Gaelic language is used by a number of persons engaging with the authority; or (2) where, in the Bòrd's opinion, there is potential for the authority to develop the use of the Gaelic language in the exercise of its functions.

British Sign Language in Scotland

Each country has its own national sign language. For example, in Italy, Italian Sign Language is used, while in France, French Sign Language is used. Some countries have more than one sign language. In Spain there is Catalanian Sign Language and Galician Sign Language. In Belgium there is Flemish-Belgian Sign Language, Belgian-French Sign Language, and German Sign Language. In Finland, there is Finnish Sign Language and Finnish-Swedish Sign Language. While sign languages do not have the same vocabulary or syntax as the spoken languages of the same geographical area, sign languages exhibit the same types of variation, according to region, social or ethnic group, social situation, age, and gender. Like spoken languages, sign languages also evolve over time (Timmerman, 2005).



In the UK, British Sign Language is the first and preferred language of many Deaf people. As with sign languages elsewhere, BSL is a visual-gestural language using the hands, face and head to communicate. It has a different grammatical structure to English. In the proposal for this Bill, Mark Griffith notes:

“Across Scotland, BSL is the indigenous manual language in the same way that English is the indigenous spoken language. Deaf people who use BSL are a part of a recognised cultural and linguistic minority. Unlike people who speak other minority languages, many Deaf sign language users cannot learn to speak English as they cannot hear the language.” (Griffin, 2012)

Action on Hearing Loss (Edmond, 2012) estimates there to be 850,000 people in Scotland who are deaf or hard of hearing. The reasons for hearing loss are varied, with age related hearing loss the most common, affecting more than half of people aged over 60. There is a broad spectrum of levels of hearing loss ranging from mild to profound deafness. Depending on the level and when deafness occurs, people use a range of methods of communication. For example, many people lip-read, while others use electronic note-takers, hearing aids or other equipment. Many people rely on a combination of methods of communication (Edmond, 2011).

There are approximately 120 children born in Scotland each year with a hearing impairment. Over 1,000 children and young people under the age of 19 in Scotland have severe or profound hearing loss (Griffin, 2012). The impact of deafness in childhood can be significant for both the child and for parents, guardians, siblings and others attempting to communicate with a deaf child. For example, as 90 per cent of deaf children are born to hearing parents, there is a general lack of understanding of deafness and its impact on a child’s life (National Deaf Children’s Society, 2013).

Scotland’s Census 2011 included the question: “Do you use a language other than English at home?” Respondents were given the option to answer: “No, English only”; “Yes, British Sign Language”; and “Yes, other”. There were 12,533 respondents who reported using BSL at home (Scotland’s Census, 2011). Annexe 1 shows the number of BSL users in each Scottish local authority.

The Census question that was asked in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2011 differed significantly from that asked in Scotland. It asked about the main language spoken at home, while the Scottish Census question implied a focus on the main language spoken and any second language used at home.

To illustrate, in a household with four people where one is a Deaf BSL user, in answer to the Scottish Census question all four people would potentially say that BSL is used at home as all will likely use BSL at some point when communicating with the Deaf BSL user. In the Census question from the rest of the UK only one person is likely to say BSL is used as the main language.

Table 1 provides estimates of numbers of BSL users in the four countries of the UK, using the question from the Scottish Census and then the question used in the Census for other parts of the UK. These figures illustrate how these different questions affect the likely rate of response. Clearly the estimate of number of BSL users across the UK is far higher using the question applied in the Scottish Census.

Table 1: Number of BSL users in UK countries, using Scottish Census figures or Census from the rest of the UK, 2011

	Total population	Applying Scottish census prevalence	Applying rest of UK census prevalence
Scotland	5,295,000	12,533	1,530
England	52,012,456	129,812	15,316
Wales	3,063,456	7,501	885
Northern Ireland	1,810,863	4,434	523
Total	63,181,775	154,713	18,254

Source: Cassiopeia Consultancy (2013)

While the number of BSL users in Scotland is potentially significant, there remain very few registered BSL interpreters in Scotland. Table 2 shows the total number of people living in Scotland that are registered on one or both of the main registers of interpreters.

Current information from the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) indicates that in December 2014 there were 78 sign language interpreters registered with their service: 66 BSL interpreters; 10 trainee interpreters and 2 that can offer deafblind manual³ interpreting (SASLI, 2014). There is also a register of interpreters in Scotland held by the UK National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD). On this register are 54 interpreters (46 interpreters and 8 trainees). There are also 3 interpreters for deafblind people on the NRCPD register.

Table 2: Number and type of interpreters registered in Scotland

	SASLI	NRCPD
BSL interpreters	66	46
BSL trainees	10	8
Deafblind interpreters	2	3

Source: SASLI and NCRPD personal communication (December 2014)

³ People are defined as deafblind if they have a severe degree of combined visual and auditory impairment resulting in problems of communication, information and mobility. Most deafblind people are over the age of 60 and have become dual sensory impaired as part of the ageing process. Many have some limited vision and/or hearing. Different forms of communication support are needed by deafblind people, including one-to-one signing by a BSL interpreter or “deafblind manual” - a hands-on approach to BSL that involves a BSL user placing their hands over the hands of the signer, so that they can feel the signs being used.

It is important to note that qualified and trainee interpreters can be registered with both SASLI and NRCPD. This means that the number of interpreters is likely to be lower than the combination of these two registers as many people could be registered with both. In addition, there are also qualified interpreters employed by public authorities. No central record is kept of the total number of qualified interpreters working in the Scottish public sector.

POLICY MEASURES

There has been a range of measures pursued by the government in Scotland with the aim of increasing recognition and support for BSL since the Parliament was established.

In March 2003, following an announcement from the UK government that BSL was to be recognised as a language in its own right, the First Minister of Scotland recognised BSL as a language and made a commitment to increasing the number of sign language interpreters in Scotland (Scottish Parliament, 2003). In March 2011, Shona Robison, then Minister for Public Health and Sport, again highlighted recognition of BSL. In her speech she stated: "it is important that we do all that we can to support the use of the language [BSL]." (Scottish Government, 2011a)

The then Scottish Executive also published research investigating access to public services in Scotland by BSL users (Kyle, et al, 2005) and in February 2007 produced a consultation document: *A Strategy for Scotland's Languages*, which highlighted the importance of BSL as a language that contributes to Scotland's "rich cultural heritage" (Scottish Executive, 2007).

There has been a British Sign Language and Linguistic Access Working Group ("the working group") within the Scottish Executive and now the Scottish Government since 2000. The working group involves Deaf organisations and Scottish Executive officials with the aim of improving linguistic access for Deaf people in Scotland. It is also concerned to raise awareness of linguistic access among policy makers, professionals, services providers, Deaf people and the population as a whole (Scottish Government, 2011b).

In February 2009, the working group published a scoping study on linguistic access to education for deaf pupils and students in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2009a). In August 2009, it published: *The Long and Winding Road: a roadmap to British Sign Language and Linguistic Access in Scotland* ("Roadmap"). The Roadmap highlighted the major issues that require attention to improve linguistic access for deaf people in Scotland. The focus was on achieving change so that deaf people are "afforded the same life chances as their fellow citizens" (Scottish Government, 2009b). In 2014, the working group started work on an update to the Roadmap in order to identify where progress has been made and to highlight priority areas for action. This update is due to be published early in 2015 (Scottish Government, 2014).

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("CRPD") came into force in 2008 and was ratified by the UK in 2009. CRPD reaffirms that disabled people should enjoy their human rights on an equal basis to non-disabled people. It recognises that disabled people continue, in practice, to face barriers in access to public services, employment etc., and sets out the measures governments are expected to take to remove these barriers and ensure the rights of disabled people are respected. CRPD covers rights in areas such as health, education, employment, access to justice, personal security, independent living and access to information. CRPD makes specific reference to the importance of recognising the cultural and linguistic

identity of deaf people (Article 30) and to recognising and promoting the use of sign language (Article 21) (United Nations). In the UK State report on CRPD (United Nations, 2013) specific reference is made to sign language, under Article 21 measures. The report cites the UK recognition of BSL as a language as well as specific activities being taken forward in Scotland and Wales to promote BSL. For example, in Scotland, there has been government funding to develop the infrastructure to train and register a greater number of BSL/English interpreters to address the shortage in Scotland. In Wales, the Assembly Government and European Social Fund has funded the BSL Futures scheme to improve access to public services for BSL users across Wales and has increased the number of BSL teachers.

As the Scottish Government has recently stated in its Memorandum on the BSL Bill, despite the range of measures taken, challenges remain. For example:

- Deaf pupils have significantly lower school attainment than their hearing peers, and are not always able to access education in BSL.
- BSL users are still rarely able to access public services or information directly in BSL.
- There is limited understanding of the needs of BSL users amongst many public bodies and a lack of awareness about how to ensure that Deaf people can access services and information.
- There are very few professionals who can communicate in BSL.
- There is a shortage of registered BSL interpreters in Scotland.
- Understanding and testing of when and how technology can be used to assist in the development of alternative models of interpreting (such as remote interpreting) is under-developed.
- The cost of interpreting and translating from written English into BSL (and vice versa) remains high.
- There is no formal provision for teaching BSL in schools alongside other modern languages, meaning that the wider learning and usage of the language is not being promoted (for example in the way that Gaelic and Scots is being promoted).
- There is no clear career progression pathway for linguists wishing to pursue a career in BSL, or for professionals wishing to deliver their service directly to BSL users in their own language. (Scottish Government, 2014)

Legislation on Sign Language in Other Countries

A study drawing together the place of sign language in European Union (EU) member states (Timmermans, 2005) highlights the measures that had been taken to promote sign language in EU countries. There is no consistent pattern of policy or legislative steps taken to recognise and promote sign language across EU member states. Several do, however, emphasis offering sign language in education, improving the opportunities to train as a sign language interpreter and supporting parents with deaf children to learn sign language.

Many countries follow the same approach as currently taken in the UK, with deafness included in the measures taken to tackle disability discrimination. Few have, however, taken explicit

steps to legislate on sign language. Below are some examples of legislation on sign language that have been pursued by EU member states:

- Finland was one of the first countries to adopt sign language in its constitution. The Constitution Act of Finland was renewed in 1999 and contains a general anti-discrimination clause. This clause rules that without acceptable grounds, no one shall be placed in a different position because of, e.g., language and disability. In addition, Section 17 states that the rights of those who use sign language and of those who require interpretation or translation services because of disability shall be guaranteed by Act of Parliament.
- The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic ensures entitlement to free and compulsory education. It also sets out entitlement to special education, protection and valuing of Portuguese Sign Language as both a cultural expression and instrument for access to education and equal opportunities.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia regulates human rights and fundamental freedoms and ensures equality before the law. Together with the Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons, this provides the legal basis for the preparation of the Sign Language Act. This Act gives deaf citizens the right to use their language, i.e. Slovenian Sign Language. It also ensures deaf citizens the right to a sign language interpreter when dealing with the authorities, and an additional 30 hours of interpretation for situations at their discretion. There is also a right to 100 hours of interpretation per year for educational reasons offered to pupils and students. Finally, the Act established the Council for Slovenian Sign Language to take forward a global linguistic policy for Slovenian Sign Language, with the active involvement of deaf people

On access to education:

- In Finland, section 10 of the law on basic education (628/1998) states that the language used for teaching in a school can be Finnish Sign Language. In the law on upper secondary schools (629/1998) the language used in teaching can be Finnish Sign Language. The student can choose the language in which he/she is taught. If the student chooses, sign language can be taught as a mother tongue. For high school, vocational and university education, sign language interpretation services are provided according to the legislation in force.
- In Norway, a new Education Act, covering primary education (10 years) and secondary education (3 years) and certain aspects of preschool education (up to age 6 years), was passed in the Norwegian Parliament in 1998. This legislation secures the right of every deaf pre-school child, and every deaf child in primary and secondary school to receive their education through Norwegian Sign Language, where this is their first language. The National Curricula, which is compulsory for all children, states that the intended outcome for deaf children is “functional bilingualism”.

On recognition of sign language as a minority language:

- Austrian Sign Language was recognised by the Austrian Parliament in 2005, with the Austrian Constitution amended to include a statement recognising Austrian Sign Language as an independent language

- In June 2007, Spanish and Catalan Sign Languages were recognised by the Spanish Parliament to be official languages in Spain.
- In Belgium, the Parliament of French-speaking Belgium recognised French Belgian Sign Language (LSFB) in a decree in October 2003. This includes a cultural recognition and the establishment of a commission to advise the Government of the French Community in all matters relating to LSFB.
- In Belgium, the Flemish Parliament recognised Flemish Sign Language (VGT) in April 2006. This includes a cultural recognition, the establishment of a commission to advise the Flemish Government in all matters relating to VGT and structural funding of research and development of VGT.
- Through the Act on Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons in Germany, which came into force in 2002, German Sign Language is now recognised as a language in its own right.

Beyond the EU, statutory provision to recognise or set out a right to sign language is becoming more common. New Zealand is one example of a country that has introduced legislation on sign language. As a result of the passing of the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006, NZ sign language is now the third official language of NZ, joining Maori and English (Office for Disability Issues, 2006).

In Chile, Chilean Sign Language was enacted into law in 2010, with legislation stating that sign language is the natural means of communication among the deaf community. In the Czech Republic (before joining the EU) Czech Sign Language gained legal recognition with the passing of the Sign Language Law in 1998. In Kenya, the Constitution recognises Kenya Sign Language as an official language, with the State required to promote the development and use of Kenyan Sign Language. Further, the official languages of the parliament are Kiswahili, English and Kenyan Sign Language. The business of the parliament can therefore be conducted in any of these three languages. In Uganda, Uganda Sign Language is recognised in the 1995 Constitution.

THE BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (SCOTLAND) BILL

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill (Scottish Parliament, 2014a) is a single purpose Bill that focuses on promoting BSL mainly through the production and review of BSL plans by the Scottish Ministers and listed authorities. The Bill has five substantive sections, all of which can be viewed as facilitating the promotion of BSL:

- Section 1 imposes obligations on the Scottish Ministers to promote and facilitate promotion, use and understanding of BSL. To this end, the Bill requires the Scottish Ministers, in each session of the Parliament, to prepare a plan setting out a strategy for the promotion of BSL. The plan is to be known as a “British Sign Language National Plan for Scotland”. Preparation of the National Plan is to include publication and consultation on a draft plan, ensuring engagement with BSL users and those who represent BSL users. Section 1 also sets out a timetable for when the first and subsequent National Plans should be published.

- Section 2 requires that a Scottish Minister is assigned special responsibility for ensuring that the functions set out in the Bill are carried out.
- Section 3 requires listed authorities to prepare a BSL plan – to be called an “Authority Plan”. Schedule 2 of the Bill lists 116 authorities⁴ required to produce a BSL plan. The authority plan should set out the measures to be taken to use BSL when carrying out its functions. It should also include timescales for these measures to be taken. Subsequent authority plans should set out how, when and to what extent previous measures have been taken forward.

Section 3 notes that an authority plan should “try to achieve consistency” with the current National Plan. It should consider ways that BSL can be used in delivery of the public authority’s functions, the potential for development of BSL use, any representations made to the public authority about BSL, any relevant comments from previous Performance Reviews and any guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers.

Section 3 also requires, similar to the production of the National Plan, that listed authorities publish and consult on a draft of the authority plan and take account of representations received. Listed authorities are required to consult with BSL users and those who represent BSL users, in common with the consultation over the National Plan.

- A timetable for production of the first and subsequent authority plans is provided at Section 4. Sections 3 and 4 also include provisions for a public authority to revise its authority plan at any time and publication of a new plan to highlight these revisions.
- Finally, at Section 5, the Bill requires that a BSL Performance Review be prepared, published and laid before the Parliament by the Scottish Ministers. Section 5 requires that the Performance Review include an account of action taken and outcomes achieved as a result of the measures set out in the National Plan and Authority plans, illuminated through examples of good practice and any poor performance found.

In response to the consultation on the proposed BSL Bill, there was a substantial level of support for the aims of the Bill. There was also majority agreement that legislation was required as the appropriate mechanism to meet those aims.

There were, however, a minority of respondents who did not feel that legislation was needed as deafness is (through disability provisions) a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. This view was, however, countered by those who note that other groups whose first language is not English do not have to declare themselves “disabled” in order to access services and information in their own language.

Some respondents proposed extending the scope of the Bill, for example:

- Focusing on historical and cultural aspects of BSL as well as promotion of the language
- Awareness of teacher education, including a minimum level of BSL qualification at level 3 among teachers using BSL.

⁴ This total breaks down as: 25 colleges; 19 higher education institutions (including the Open University); 32 local authorities; 14 health boards; 5 special health boards; and 21 other bodies.

- Schools offering BSL as a modern language as a way of evidencing promotion of BSL

None of these proposals are set out on the face of the Bill. However, the plans that listed authorities take forward to promote BSL could potentially include these themes.

While the focus of the BSL Bill is on the promotion of BSL, the intention is that the production of BSL plans will raise the profile of the language and, with this, its use in delivery of services. The Bill does not go as far as imposing a statutory requirement on authorities to provide BSL interpreters or translation services, nor does it require listed authorities to deliver specific services to BSL users or those wishing to learn BSL.

A range of reasons for bringing forward this Bill were put forward by Mark Griffin, when giving evidence to the Education and Culture Committee (ECC) on 16 December 2014. First, he noted that the Bill would “place an obligation on the Government to promote the use of BSL and put it on an equal footing with Gaelic”. He also highlighted the current inconsistencies in the provision of BSL in different areas of Scotland, with the BSL Bill intended to address these:

“It is clear that there are pockets of excellent practice throughout the country, but that does not mean that that is happening everywhere” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

“The Bill would enable the Government to coordinate public authorities actions, giving them a strategic policy lead through a national plan, and say clearly that we value British Sign Language... by putting the approach on a statutory footing” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

One Member asked why the Bill only required publication of BSL plans rather than stipulating rights or duties in relation to service delivery:

“**Chic Brodie:** Why does the Bill not attempt to close current service gaps so that there is a level playing field for all those who would benefit from others using BSL?”

“**Mark Griffin:** The Bill sets a platform to start to close that gap by making people throughout Scotland aware of the services that public authorities are providing... If we were to talk about closing gaps in services, there is a danger that we would stray into equalities issues. For me it is a cultural issue. It is about people’s access to services in their own language and giving people a platform to challenge public authorities on their provision of services in that language.” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

The Bill does not confer on BSL users any rights or impose service obligations on authorities. As such, the Bill is not directly about the needs of BSL users, nor is it about the needs of a wider group of people with hearing impairments. Its focus is solely on promoting the use of BSL. It is therefore beyond the scope of the Bill to promote other minority languages or language formats (e.g. Braille or technological support).

Role of the Scottish Ministers

There is a key role for the Scottish Ministers in implementing a number of the requirements set out in the Bill. The Delegated Powers Memorandum (Scottish Parliament, 2014d) cites three powers to make subordinate legislation that emerge from this Bill, as follows:

- (a) Amending the requirements on listed authorities as to the content of authority plans.

- (b) Altering the timetable for publication of plans and performance reviews where “exceptional circumstances” arise.
- (c) Amending the list of authorities required to produce authority plans.

In his evidence to the Education and Culture Committee on 16 December, Mark Griffin highlighted both the leadership role that the Scottish Government will play and the need for the Scottish Government to put resources into supporting this activity:

“At the end of the day it will be up to the Government to choose what resources to put into its policy priorities. If its ultimate priority is classes for families of BSL users, the bill gives it the opportunity to set that priority in its national direction and to put resources behind it” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

The cost of implementing activities set out in the National Plan and authority plans is not included in the Financial Memorandum accompanying the Bill. However, Mark Griffin makes clear that, in giving ownership of the implementation of several of the provisions in the BSL Bill to the Scottish Ministers, the aspiration is that the Scottish Government would support a commitment to BSL through the provision of financial support to listed authorities:

“I was not specific about any particular area... because I was aware that a large sum of money would be involved. I wanted to leave it open to the Government of the day to set its policy priorities and decide on the resources that it could match to that” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

In writing a Government Memorandum on the Bill, the current Scottish Government has stated its support for the principles of the Bill:

“We see the provisions of the Bill as being consistent with the direction of current Scottish Government policy in this area... The Scottish Government supports the principles of the BSL (Scotland) Bill, and shares the Member’s view that requiring the Scottish Government and key public authorities to develop information about BSL provision will help promote the use of BSL in Scotland, improving linguistic access for Deaf BSL users, and enable Deaf people who use BSL to enjoy greater participation in daily and public life.” (Scottish Government, 2014)

The central role for the Scottish Government in setting the strategic policy direction for the promotion of BSL suggests that this Bill takes a high-level, top-down focus. Through this, there is a requirement on the Scottish Government, now and in the future, to offer an on-going political commitment to promoting BSL. Mark Griffin, when giving evidence to the Education and Culture Committee, recognised the importance of this on-going political commitment for the implementation of the provisions in the Bill:

“It will all depend on the strength of the Government, the Minister in question, the Government’s national plan, its guidance and the resources that the Government choose to put in” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

In the consultation on the proposed Bill, there was no specific question about the role proposed for the Scottish Government. However, in response to the question of potential benefits emerging from the proposed Bill, some responses suggested a central role for the Scottish Government providing strategic policy direction. For example, respondents noted the potential for consistency across public bodies, for a national review of current communication and

services to be pursued, and that this Bill supporting the Scottish Government aims of Scotland being “wealthier, fairer, smarter and healthier” (Scottish Parliament and Griffin, 2013).

Consulting on BSL Plans

Section 3 of the BSL Bill requires listed authorities, in preparing an authority plan, to publish, and consult on, a draft of the plan taking into account any representations received through this consultation. Those to be consulted are those “directly affected by the authority plan or otherwise have an interest in that plan”. The Bill states that consultees are to include “persons who use British Sign Language... and persons who represent users of British Sign Language”. Section 1 sets out the same consultation arrangements for the production of the National Plan (Scottish Parliament, 2014a).

The Education and Culture Committee meeting on 16 December 2014 explored the question of how this approach to consultation was to be resourced:

“Gordon MacDonald: “Given the constraints on time and on the financial resources available to many public authorities how can the Scottish Government and other public authorities ensure that they fulfil their obligation to consult effectively?”

Mark Griffin: It goes back to the resource question again. For Government and public bodies to consult effectively from the outset, they have to consult BSL users, and there is no doubt that there would be a cost to that. That does not mean I expect a public body to consult every BSL user in its area, as long as there is some input from BSL users in the area” (Scottish Parliament 2014e).

While supporting the principles of the Bill, the approach to consultation set out in Section 3 is one of the issues with which the Scottish Government has noted concern. The Government Memorandum notes that the proposed approach to consultation set out in the Bill is “problematic for a number of reasons”:

- The number of BSL users and organisations representing BSL users is limited, leading to a risk that a small number of organisations and individuals will be overwhelmed with requests to engage in consultation.
- The lack of any requirement in the Bill to translate draft or final reports into BSL risks this documentation not being appropriately accessible to Deaf BSL users.
- If the Bill was to be amended to require draft and final BSL plans to be translated, this is likely to put a significant burden on BSL translation services within a very small time period when all listed authorities will require this service. The Scottish Government note that this risks creating delays, so not being able to deliver on the timeframes for publication and consultation set out in the Bill as currently drafted.

The Scottish Government suggests that a BSL National Advisory Group is established, which could include representatives from the Scottish Government, COSLA and the BSL sector. This group, “including a significant proportion of BSL users”, would collectively advise on drafts of the National Plan and authority plans. This suggestion is intended to rationalise the consultation process and so limit the time burden on a small group of BSL users and representatives.

The proposal for an advisory group to support the Scottish Ministers was initially floated by Mark Griffin in his proposal for a BSL Bill. The proposal originally set out was for an advisory group to

advise and assist the designated Scottish Minister, whereas the proposal put forward in the Scottish Government's Memorandum is for an advisory group made up of officials and BSL users to provide the consultation mechanism to advise on drafts of the National Plan and authority plans.

Consistency in National and Authority Plans

The BSL Bill states that listed authorities, when drafting BSL plans, should “try to achieve consistency between that plan and the most recently published National Plan (Section 3(4a)). This provision is welcomed by the Scottish Government as it will contribute to a consistent approach in delivery of priorities “tailored to local circumstances” and will also make consultation, reporting and performance review more straightforward (Scottish Government, 2014).

The central role of the National Plan in setting the strategic policy focus and potentially the direction of service delivery by listed authorities is suggested by the Scottish Government in its Memorandum on the Bill to demonstrate leadership, while also providing “momentum, coordination and focus across the public sector to improve BSL users’ access to public services” (Scottish Government, 2014). As BSL users will more commonly engage with listed authorities rather than with the Scottish Government, consistency is thought to be critical to ensure delivery of Scottish Government strategic priorities across Scottish public authorities.

To this end, the Government Memorandum on the Bill proposes that, instead of an authority plan, listed authorities publish a “BSL statement”. A BSL statement would focus on setting out how the authority will work towards contributing to priorities set out in the National Plan (Scottish Government, 2014).

The issue of whether consistency risks limiting creativity to meet local need was raised in the Education and Culture Committee on 16 December 2014. The question was raised as to whether the focus on consistency risked limiting the flexibility of public authorities to respond to local or specialist demand. Mark Griffin responded by saying:

Mark Griffin: The National Plan gives authorities a steer on what the Government will expect them to deliver. The Bill says that they should ‘try to achieve consistency’. The word ‘try’ gives them the flexibility to do things as they see fit, according to local demands and needs.” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

Performance Reviews

The BSL Bill requires that a Performance Review is published toward the end of each Parliamentary session. The Performance Review is a single document that reflects on both the current National Plan and individual authority plans, to report on:

- measures taken and outcomes attained
- examples of best practice
- examples of poor performance (where these are found)

The intention is that subsequent National Plans and authority plans will use the published Performance Review to identify areas for further BSL promotion and provision.

At the Education and Culture Committee meeting on 16 December, Mark Griffin set out the purpose of producing a Performance Review:

“A public authority will state in its Plan what it will do to provide services to BSL users and how it plans to improve on that. The Performance Review will take into account whether the public authority has met its objectives” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

Questions were then raised about how performance would be reviewed:

“**Colin Beattie:** What mechanism do you envisage the Scottish Government using to review the performance of the listed authorities?”

Mark Griffin: The Government has set out an example of how that could work. The BSL advisory group could assist with the mechanism of collecting Performance Reviews and analysing them against authority plans” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

This suggests that there is an expectation on listed authorities to produce individual reviews. The information in these reviews would be used to populate a single Performance Review for all listed authorities, which is published and submitted to the Parliament. As the Policy Memorandum states:

“Subsequent Authority Plans will also provide a progress report on the measures contained in previous plans. Through the review element of these plans, listed authorities will update the Scottish Government on progress, in order for this to be reported within the Government’s Performance Review” (Scottish Parliament, 2014b)

There is no explicit requirement set out on the face of the Bill that listed authorities should produce a review of activity in time to inform the Performance Review, which happens far earlier in the cycle than preparation of subsequent authority plans. The Bill only requires listed authorities to produce, consult on and submit to the Scottish Government their first authority plan a year after the National Plan is published, and their subsequent plans six months after the subsequent National Plan. As authority plans will only be produced after the Performance Review is completed and a subsequent National Plan produced, there could be challenges with the timing of activity. This could limit the potential for progress by listed authorities to be captured through the Performance Review.

Within the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 there is a statutory requirement to monitor public authority Gaelic language plans. This provision comes earlier in the cycle than the formal review stage. It focuses centrally on monitoring progress on Gaelic language planning after the plan has been in place for a period of time (at least 12 months). It offers the Bòrd the right to request a report on the measures set out in the plan. This allows the Bòrd an early warning system if no progress is being made. It also offers a mechanism to maintain a review of progress over time, not just after a number of years of activity. There is no comparable provision within the BSL Bill.

As Performance Reviews are the mechanism for highlighting good and poor practice, the question of penalties or sanctions for poor performance was raised at the Education and Culture Committee meeting on 16 December 2014. Mark Griffin’s response was:

“As I said at the outset, the ethos of the Bill is about promotion and encouraging the positive aspects of BSL and its culture... A formal censure or sanctions regime would run counter to that approach. I do not think that any local authority or public body wants

to be mentioned in Parliament in an unflattering way. I think that the naming and shaming approach is enough to ensure that authorities carry out what they say they will do in their plans.” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

Timetable for Publication of Plans and Reviews

The Bill sets out a timetable for the publication of BSL plans and Performance Reviews. In practice this means - if the next Parliamentary session runs from 2016 to 2020 - the first National Plan would be published by May 2017, the first Authority Plans by May 2018 and the first Performance Review by April 2019. For production of subsequent plans the timetable is shorter - six months after commencement of the Parliamentary session for production of the National Plan and then six months after this for Authority Plans.

Lessons emerging from Bòrd na Gàidhlig⁵ suggest that different authorities follow different timelines for production of Gaelic Language Plans. Some fit this activity into their three year strategic planning cycle, while others will work to a long term strategic plan, with milestones set out in five year action plans. This suggests that a level of flexibility and negotiation with authorities as to how planning for BSL might best sit alongside other reporting mechanisms already in place could be helpful. Notably, the 2005 Act does not require changes to Gaelic Language Plans every five years. Rather the requirement is that plans are reviewed and submitted to the Bòrd every five years, with or without revisions from the previous plan.

The Scottish Government Memorandum notes “the timing of the publication of the plans etc. under the Bill is quite complex”. It suggests that: “a more straightforward approach would be to require plans etc. to be published within a period of the Act coming into force etc. and then at regular intervals thereafter” (Scottish Government, 2014).

The Government Memorandum goes on to say:

“Experience from implementing the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 suggests that the reporting and review cycle set out in the Bill could be too frequent. The Bòrd publishes a National Plan on a five year cycle and this has significant resource implications. Comments from the Bòrd, among others, suggest that this is too short a period. Once a cycle is complete they feel the need to begin the process again almost immediately.”

“There is a real danger that the focus on publishing plans could create a heavy (and expensive) bureaucratic burden which may not result in improved access to information and services in BSL.” (Scottish Government, 2014)

Mark Griffin explained the rationale for the timetable as it is set out in the Bill:

“The cycle has been designed in that way purely to ensure that it is the Government that drafts the National Plan that carries out the Performance Review, rather than a different Government with different political priorities (Scottish Parliament, 2014e; p20)

While the Bill provides timeframes for planning and review, there is no explicit recognition given to either the time involved in identifying priorities and consulting on draft plans before these are

⁵ Personal communication with an official from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, January 2015.

finalised by listed authorities. Nor is there recognition of the time involved in gathering, analysing and reviewing the work of public authorities in order to inform the published Performance Review.

To allow time for these activities, the Scottish Government Memorandum suggests a seven year cycle of planning and review, as follows:

Proposed Timetable		
	BSL Bill	Scottish Government
First National Plan	May 2017	May 2017
First authority plans	May 2018	May 2018
First Performance Review	June 2019	May 2021
Second National Plan	November 2020	May 2023
Second authority plans	May 2021	May 2024

Source: Scottish Government (2014)

Mark Griffin responded to this proposed timetable at the Education and Culture Committee on 16 December 2014:

“I discussed that approach with the Minister and he mentioned the difficulties with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. The Government feels that the five year provision in the Act means that it is a bit tight for time, so I am open to the suggestion that the cycle be lengthened, as long as there is evidence that that will make the exercise more productive. That would mean moving away from the original policy intention, which would have involved each Government reviewing its own plans.” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Accompanying the BSL Bill is a Financial Memorandum setting out the cost of implementing the provisions in the Bill. The focus is on the costs of production and publication of National Plans, authority plans and Performance Reviews. It does not attempt to cost any additional services offered by listed authorities as a result of measures set out in authority plans, although it does note an aspiration that service improvements will emerge from the production of plans:

“It is hoped that the obligations under the Bill... will, in practice, lead public authorities to increase the use they make of BSL and the extent to which they are able to respond to demand for services in BSL. However, figures cannot be put on any additional costs arising in this way because it is not possible to estimate how much additional activity will be generated and what the nature of that activity will be.” (Scottish Parliament, 2014c)

The Financial Memorandum estimates total costs for different bodies affected by the Bill, as follows:

- Scottish Government - in the first Parliamentary session (2016-2020) between £80,000 and £140,000. In subsequent Parliamentary sessions between £60,000 and £100,000.

- Scottish Administration – in the first Parliamentary session (2016-2020) between £120,000 and £180,000 for all six agencies. In subsequent Parliamentary sessions between £60,000 and £120,000.
- Local authorities – in the first Parliamentary session (2016-2020) between £640,000 and £960,000 for all 32 local authorities. In subsequent Parliamentary sessions between £320,000 and £640,000.
- Other listed authorities – in the first Parliamentary session (2016-2020) between £1.54 million and £2.31 million for all 77 other listed authorities. In subsequent Parliamentary sessions between £770,000 and £1.54 million.

This amounts to a total cost in the first Parliamentary session of £2.38 million to £3.59 million for production of the National Plan, authority plans and the first Performance Review. In subsequent Parliamentary sessions the cost is estimated to be £1.21 million to £2.4 million. These costs assume a four year Parliamentary session and represent the total estimated costs per session. In practice, the costs are likely to be concentrated in some financial years rather than spread across the four year session e.g. during the drafting of a plan, consultation with stakeholders and the review of performance.

The Scottish Government Memorandum on the BSL Bill notes that the costs estimated for implementation of the Bill do not include the cost of translating BSL Plans into BSL, the costs of supporting any advisory group that is established or continued investment in a national shared system for online interpreting (Scottish Government, 2014). Lessons from the implementation of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 suggest significant additional resource implications, including: time involved in supporting listed authorities with drafting of authority plans, time involved in consultation on plans (as discussed earlier), the need for dedicated staff time to support authorities with writing plans and monitor their progress – both through the monitoring requirements set out in the 2005 Act and the formal review process after five years. Within Bòrd na Gàidhlig there are two full time staff who work solely on Gaelic Language Plans. At present there are 34 public authorities with published Gaelic Language Plans. This is a far lower number than is proposed through the BSL Bill, where approximately 116 authorities are required to produce BSL plans.

The absence of costings for translation of BSL Plans was discussed in the evidence session with Mark Griffin at the Education and Culture Committee on 16 December 2014. At that session, Mark Griffin noted that some costs likely to arise from this Bill had not been included in the Financial Memorandum. For example, in answer to a question asking whether BSL plans should be translated into BSL, he stated:

“Yes, I think they should translate their plans into BSL. It is not something that is in the Bill; that would have been an additional cost in the Financial Memorandum... I did not include that in the Bill purely because I was trying to keep the costs of the Bill as low as possible.” (Scottish Parliament, 2014e)

The Scottish Government suggests that the upper estimates for the likely cost of implementing the provisions in the Bill are £6,062,800 in the first session. As there is estimated to be an investment of around £2 million from the Scottish Government for BSL for the 2016-2020 session this is expected to reduce the total cost during the first session to £4,062,800. The Scottish Government reiterates that, unlike the Financial Memorandum accompanying the Gaelic Bill, the accompanying papers for the BSL Bill do not attempt to cost the implementation

of any practical steps arising from the production of plans. As a result, the cost estimates only consider likely financial implications for writing and reviewing plans, rather than changing the delivery of services as a result of any proposals in BSL plans.

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ANNEXE 1 – CENSUS 2011, HOUSEHOLDS WITH BSL SPEAKERS

Households in Scotland where someone speaks British Sign Language at home, 2011

Local Authority	Number	%
Aberdeen	563	4.49%
Aberdeenshire	418	3.34%
Angus	262	2.09%
Argyll & Bute	152	1.21%
Clackmannanshire	129	1.03%
Dumfries & Galloway	308	2.46%
Dundee	408	3.26%
East Ayrshire	421	3.36%
East Dunbartonshire	183	1.46%
East Lothian	182	1.45%
East Renfrewshire	133	1.06%
Edinburgh	1,021	8.15%
Eilean Siar	36	0.29%
Falkirk	402	3.21%
Fife	951	7.59%
Glasgow	1,717	13.70%
Highland	632	5.04%
Inverclyde	212	1.69%
Midlothian	233	1.86%
Moray	257	2.05%
North Ayrshire	477	3.81%
North Lanarkshire	828	6.61%
Orkney Islands	25	0.20%
Perth & Kinross	255	2.03%
Renfrewshire	349	2.78%
Scottish Borders	228	1.82%
Shetland Islands	62	0.49%
South Ayrshire	180	1.44%
South Lanarkshire	722	5.76%
Stirling	123	0.98%
West Dunbartonshire	201	1.60%
West Lothian	463	3.69%
Scotland	12,533	100%

Source: Scotland's Census 2011

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