Submission from NHS Dumfries and Galloway

I am responding on behalf of NHS Dumfries and Galloway to your call for evidence on the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway fully supports the aim of encouraging awareness and promoting the use of BSL throughout our organisation.

However, I am not convinced that this legislation is the best approach. Perhaps a national strategy/set of rights and standards would be more useful than individual action plans within authorities. This would include a requirement to involve/consult with those who are directly affected and perhaps funding could be provided to allow authorities to carry out training on deaf awareness and inclusive communication in the broadest sense.

The focus on BSL does not take cognisance of the fact that there is a range of communication tools available and staff/patients should be aware of the range of tools available rather than focusing on only one element. A patient should be offered the communication tool which is most useful to their particular needs, as part of person centred care.

I am also concerned by the shortage of BSL interpreters nationally and think that this must be taken into consideration as part of this Bill.

I hope that you find these comments helpful.

Yours faithfully

Lynsey Fitzpatrick
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NHS Dumfries and Galloway