1. I am responding on behalf of East Lothian Council to your call for evidence about the financial aspects of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill.

2. The Council supports the aim of encouraging awareness and use of BSL; however it is of the view that this should be within the context of promoting inclusive communication in the broadest sense. The Council is not persuaded that legislation is the most suitable tool and is also mindful of the statutory responsibilities it has under the Equalities Act 2010.

3. The Financial Memorandum to the Bill suggests that the cost to a council of producing a first plan would be £20,000 – £30,000; and that subsequent plans would cost £10,000 - £20,000 to produce. For the Committee’s information, East Lothian Council has received 8 requests for a BSL interpreter in the last two years. Average cost for the service was between £80 - £100 per request, depending on relevant requirements. Given this relatively low level of demand among the population of East Lothian, it would be my view that the potential costs quoted in the Financial Memorandum to the Bill for producing BSL plans would seem to be disproportionate to the level of need we have seen to date in our area.

4. The Financial Memorandum specifically excludes the possible costs of implementing the plans made under the Bill. Given that no extra money is to be made available, there is a risk of plans having no substance, because local authorities are not in a position to allocate new monies to new activity and do not themselves see that BSL should be championed over and above other inclusive means of communication. If this happens, the money spent on new plans will itself have been wasted.