BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (SCOTLAND) BILL:  
FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM SUBMISSION  
FROM MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL

Consultation
Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so, did you comment on the financial assumptions made?  
1. Midlothian Council did respond to the consultation exercise preceding the Bill. Reference was made to the response made by Deaf Action, the organisation used by Midlothian to provide specialist services to residents of Midlothian affected by hearing impairment. Comment was made on the potential to incorporate a degree of work associated with planning and awareness raising around BSL, within existing strategic planning processes. The resource implications of the implementation of the BSL Bill are of concern given the current financial position of the Council.

If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?  
2. The FM assumes a planning process very specifically for BSL rather than incorporating BSL issues into other strategic planning streams associated with inclusion, disability and equality, in particular the work associated with the implementation of See Hear.

Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?  
3. Yes

Costs
If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.
4. Although the FM allows for estimated costs associated with the creation of a BSL plan, no reference is made to any financial allowance for implementation. Expectations amongst the BSL community will surely be raised by the creation of such plans, increasing demand on services which will not necessarily be equipped or funded to meet the resulting need. Given the lack of a national register of those who are deaf or are BLS users, estimates of potential associated costs are extremely difficult, particularly given that it is difficult to predict the increased demand for BSL as a consequence of the Bill.

Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?
5. From our experience in Midlothian of facilitating consultation events to allow co-production of plans, it would appear the financial allowances proposed would be adequate. This is based on estimated primary costs being:-

- Planning Officer time : 8-12 weeks FT equivalent £7508-£11263
- 2 local consultation events including required communication support £2000 each
- Publication of document utilising required range of accessible formats £2000
Promotion of the plan including utilising technology specific to the needs of BSL users themselves £2000

In terms of savings, any improvement in access to and service provision for BSL users can only lead to greater wellbeing of the individuals and their carers. This will therefore have a preventative impact on future, more acute service demand both in health and social care. Accurate measurement of this however, as always, is difficult in the short term.

If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

6. Given the current financial climate, it would not seem possible that any new funding could be identified specifically for the implementation of any BSL plan. Work already being planned through the implementation of See Hear however, will be aiming to improve inclusive communication in general for all those with sensory impairment as well as raising awareness and tackling equality issues. A national shortage of trained BSL interpreters can lead to extremely high individual usage costs when service is required. Government investment in this has the potential to save costs at a local level and offset potential increase in demand. Also, Government investment in the development and availability of alternative, more efficient methods of facilitating BSL communication support would be required.

Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?

7. The margins of uncertainty around the requirements associated with the creation of the plans would appear to be acceptable. Potential arising implementation costs however, appear to be beyond capture given so many unknown quantities as well as the influence of other associated policies and strategies developing over the timescales involved.

Wider Issues

Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?

8. As already stated, costs associated with the production of an Authority plan may have been captured but potential costs following on from the plan have not been captured at all. If funding for implementation is not available, the spending on plan production may be non-productive. Failure to implement may have implications on Health, Education and Social Care service provision further down the line.

Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?

9. Unknown