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Economy and Gaelic
Leas Phrìomh Mhinistear agus Rùnaire a' Chaibineit
airson Eaconamaidh agus Gàidhlig
Kate Forbes MSP
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Karen Adam MSP
Convenor, Equalities, Human Rights, and Civil
Justice Committee
By Email

23 March 2026

Dear Karen,

Thank you for your letter of 5 March 2026 following the committee evidence session on the Sign Loud report and for sharing the additional feedback from this session. I was pleased to attend the SignLoud event in Parliament in December where I met with the researchers and participants. I was struck by the powerful evidence they presented as well as the important work they are undertaking.

Scottish Government officials from both British Sign Language (BSL) policy and Violence Against Women and Girls policy continue to engage with the Sign Loud research team. The SignLoud team were invited to present at the last meeting of the Equally Safe Advisory Board meeting their report has been shared with the Secretariat for the BSL Justice Advisory Group (BSLJAG) for consideration at a future meeting. Connections are also being made with members of the Implementation Advisory Group of the BSL National Plan 2023-2029.

The Scottish Government accepted 40 out of 44 recommendations made by the Committee report following your inquiry of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, BSL National Plan 2023-2029, and BSL Local Plans. We also agreed to consider a further three recommendations which require more detailed analysis. Our response to this report sets out how this will be achieved. We have declined one recommendation as this is not within the remit of the Scottish Government to respond to.

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I note that the Committee remain interested in the recommendation regarding a national oversight body or BSL National Centre of Excellence being developed in Scotland. In my response to your report, I noted that although the committee has not outlined the function, remit or alignment of a BSL National Centre of Excellence within the existing Scottish landscape, the idea merits further consideration on the added value this would create for BSL users in Scotland. More detailed scoping would be required on the cost associated with the establishment and operation of a BSL National Centre for Excellence, its purpose and alignment with existing organisations and structures within the BSL landscape in Scotland. Scoping work has begun as we examine similar operating models in Scotland to inform our thinking. I am also keen to engage the Implementation Advisory Group on the BSL National Plan 2023-2029 who will provide their lived experience and expertise to our considerations of this model.

As outlined in our response to your report, the Scottish Government funds British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland, Deafblind Scotland, and Scottish Ethnic Minority Deaf Charity (SEMDC) through the Equality and Human Rights Fund. This helps to facilitate vital community engagement with policy both at a national and local level, as well as provide support, advocacy, and engagement with BSL users across Scotland. These organisations form part of the Implementation Advisory Group of the BSL National Plan 2023-2029 alongside key partners Deaf Action, the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), and Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), who gather feedback and evidence from the BSL community that informs the delivery of the BSL National Plan 2023-29.

Thank you again for highlighting the importance of universal service providers understanding the needs of BSL users who access their services, particularly in relation to the committee's recommendation around increasing the numbers of suitably trained Deaf experts or BSL interpreters for IDAAS. With regards to the facilitation of a meeting with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service or Victim Support Scotland we have reached out to these bodies to facilitate a dialogue with them and will provide further updates when we have them.

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering against the recommendations of your report, alongside delivery of actions in the BSL National Plan 2023-2029, to meet our joint ambition to make Scotland the best place for BSL users to live, work, visit, and learn.

Yours Sincerely,

KATE FORBES

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