



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

British Sign Language Plan 2025-31

28 November 2024

Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 75

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is required by the [British Sign Language Act \(Scotland\) 2015](#) to have a British Sign Language (BSL) plan, and to refresh it every six years. Our current plan expires at the end of 2024 and this paper presents our proposed new plan.
2. The SPCB's plan is required to try to achieve consistency with the most recently published National Plan. Published in 2023, the current National Plan has moved from seeking to ensure information and services are accessible to BSL users to 'making Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work, visit and learn.'
3. As with the previous SPCB approved Language Plans, the new plan has been developed by Parliamentary offices with public and MSP engagement and consultation. Overall, the aims of the plan remain consistent with the first plan's goal to support, promote and integrate BSL into the fabric of the Parliament's work. Like the SPCB's Gaelic Language Plan, this focuses around three core strands that seek to:
 - a. Facilitate interactions in BSL
 - b. Provide and promote support and opportunities to use BSL
 - c. Raise the profile of BSL
4. Our new plan has been aligned to Parliamentary values. It supports continuous improvement building upon our success and learning from our first plan. It will support our increasing experience with use of BSL and engagement with BSL users to ensure equality of opportunity. Our plan is one of many policies and

procedures which the SPCB has in place to support its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

5. The SPCB is asked to confirm it is content with the plan as presented.

Issues and options

6. During our first plan, we focused on establishing communication through BSL and growing the confidence and skills of our staff, MSPs and their staff and those visiting or engaging with us through BSL. BSL interpreted FMQs is now a regular feature and welcomed by those we consulted with for our second plan.
7. In developing the plan for 2025-2031, an organisation-wide collaborative approach was adopted to ensure that any actions included were deliverable. Our experiences in the last 6 years alongside our increased engagement with BSL users has helped mature our approach to developing and targeting services and inclusion through this plan.
8. Once developed the new plan was then consulted upon. A consultation site was established and secured good engagement from MSPs and the public. Feedback demonstrated our action plan was strong and gave us some additional methods of delivery to consider during the life of the plan. This is set out in Annex A.
9. The draft BSL plan put forward to the SPCB has 20 actions, as set out in Annex B. This plan places and in particular, compared to our first plan, gives actions to:
 - a. Widen commitments to working with BSL communities to help drive and develop how we deliver our services. This is in line with our learning on design thinking and public expectations on developing services with institutions.
 - b. Grow our contributions to the development of BSL as a language, and our support for interpreters and translators. This is in line with BSL community expectations and professional use of the language.
 - c. Support the use of BSL in the workplace, including so that being an elected representative is seen as an option for BSL users. This is in line with inclusive practices and equality of opportunity.

Governance

10. The Scottish Government is required to report to Parliament annually, and within this, on the general progress and contributions of the BSL plans of listed authorities.
11. The SPCB has ultimate responsibility for holding the organisation to account for delivering against its BSL ambitions. The Senior Executive Team will support the SPCB to fulfil these obligations and will hold the organisation to account for the implementation of this plan.
12. The Director of People, Communications and Inclusion will ensure SPCB has an annual opportunity to reflect on progress.
13. We are also committed to ensuring BSL communities can monitor our progress. We will develop reports to offer meaningful transparency, looking at publishing data within diversity and public engagement reporting, as well as service uptake and learning.

Resource implications

14. The BSL interpreting and translation budget has been included in the SPCB overall budget bid and has been sufficient for successful delivery of services to date.
15. The Plan's delivery is supported and led by the BSL Communities Officer. Activities are integrated into other teams so that the work is a collective effort with a range of expertise contributing to its successful delivery.

Publication Scheme

16. This paper can be published once the final version of the BSL plan is submitted.

Decision

17. The SPCB is invited to agree the proposed BSL Plan for 2025-2031 and associated publication and governance.

Public Engagement Services Office

November 2024