

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee
Tuesday 3 March 2026
7th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

Sign Loud: Perspectives of Deaf mothers and signing practitioners on domestic abuse, communication issues and the impact on Deaf families

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide information to help inform the Committee's evidence session on the following report:
 - [Sign Loud: Perspectives of Deaf mothers and signing practitioners on domestic abuse, communication issues and the impact on Deaf families](#)
2. BSL summaries of the report and its executive summary can be accessed on the [signs@Heriot Watt University website](#).
3. The Committee will take evidence on the report from the following witnesses:
 - Professor Jemina Napier, Heriot-Watt University
 - Dr Claire Houghton, University of Edinburgh
 - Lucy Clark, LCC Scotland
4. Lucy Clark is a BSL user and interpreters will attend the meeting to translate for her. A BSL interpretation of the evidence session will also be broadcast live on [Scottish Parliament TV](#).

Background

5. Given that a decade had passed since the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 was enacted, the Committee previously agreed to hold a short inquiry considering actions taken by the Scottish Government and public authorities listed under the Act to tackle barriers faced by BSL users in Scotland. Specifically, the Committee agreed to focus on:
 - Whether the BSL Act, the current BSL Plan and listed- authority plans are improving the lives of BSL users; and
 - What changes could be made in the shorter and longer term to improve the lives of BSL users.
6. The [Committee's report](#) and a [BSL summary](#) were published on 27 September 2025. The report found that the Act had brought significant benefits to BSL users in Scotland, including through increased visibility of the language, improved access to services, and greater empowerment of the Deaf community. However, progress had been uneven and challenges remained including through a

shortage of qualified interpreters. Specific issues were raised in the context of policy areas including education, employment, health, and justice. These topics and others were further explored in a [committee debate on the report on 11 December 2025](#). A BSL translation of the debate is available on scottishparliament.tv.

7. The Scottish Government provided its [written response to the report](#) to the Committee on 4 December 2025. A [BSL translation of the response](#) was also provided.
8. Whilst the Committee considered the impact of the 2015 Act in multiple policy areas, a particular focus for the Committee related to the impact of domestic abuse on BSL users.
9. In its report the Committee invited the Scottish Government to:
 - Help educate Deaf people (particularly women) about their rights and how the justice system works;
 - Increase the numbers of suitably trained Deaf experts (and failing that, BSL interpreters for Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy services) to provide support and advice to survivors;
 - Consider what steps could be taken to improve the accuracy and robustness of data in this area.
10. The Committee also agreed to take evidence on the Sign Loud report once it became available.

Conclusion

11. The Committee is invited to consider the above information in its evidence session on the report.

Clerks to the Committee
February 2026