

# Report

Report to:	<b>Equal Opportunities Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>29 November 2017</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>British Sign Language Plan</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Provide the Forum with an overview of the Scottish Government's British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017 – 2023.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted

## 3. Background

- 3.1. Scotland's first British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan, as required by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, was published on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017. It sets out Scotland's ambition to be the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit.
- 3.2. The Plan covers all public bodies with a national focus who are directly answerable to Scottish Ministers. It is framed around ten long-term goals covering early years and education, training and work, health, culture and the arts, transport and justice and democracy. 70 actions that the Government will take over the next three years to help make progress towards the long-term goals are included in the Plan. In 2020 a national progress report will be published, with a further set of actions to be delivered by 2023.

## 4. About the Plan

- 4.1. The National Plan was produced in collaboration with the BSL National Advisory Group (NAG), made up of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and parents with Deaf children, working alongside representatives of the public bodies that will have to implement the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. The NAG was supported in its work by the Deaf Sector Partnership (DSP), helping gather the views of BSL users around Scotland both to support the development of the Plan, and also to make sure the consultation was fully accessible.
- 4.2. Other public bodies, including local authorities, regional NHS boards, colleges and universities will publish their own BSL plans, by October 2018.
- 4.3. As a specified public authority South Lanarkshire Council has a duty under the Act to write and publish plans every six years, showing how we will promote and support BSL. The plan will set out measures that will be taken to increase or improve the use of BSL in delivery of our services. At present through our equality outcomes and our

interpretation and translation policy we already express our proactive approach to meet the needs of any member of the community that is using our services.

- 4.4. The measures in the plan will have to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound and we will have to report on each in every subsequent plan that is published, this would be to both Corporate Management Team and appropriate Committee. The plans will also have to contain any information as requested by Scottish Ministers.
- 4.5. In preparing a plan South Lanarkshire Council must have regard to the extent to which our functions are exercisable using BSL; what the potential for developing the use of BSL in connection with the exercise of our functions is; and any representations made to us in relation to using BSL when delivering services.
- 4.6. When preparing a plan, which will be produced by the Consultation, Organisational Development and Equality Team, we will have to publish and consult on a draft of the plan in order to take into account any representations that are made by members of the community or representative groups, this will include Deaf groups and groups such as South Lanarkshire Access Panel and those parents, carers and children who attend Deaf education schools in the area.
- 4.7. The Duty requires South Lanarkshire Council to publish a plan within 1 year of the first National Plan created by ministers and then within 6 months of every subsequent National Plan. Following appropriate consultation it is proposed that the plan and its associated actions should be considered by CMT and by the appropriate Committee in due course.

## **5. Long Term Goals of the National Plan**

- 5.1. The BSL National Plan's ten long-term goals for BSL in Scotland describes 70 actions Scottish Ministers will take by 2020 to make progress towards these goals, including:-

- ◆ improving access to a wide range of information and public services in BSL
- ◆ removing the barriers that prevent BSL users\* from becoming teachers
- ◆ investigating the level of BSL of teachers and support staff in schools
- ◆ developing Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) awards in BSL
- ◆ enabling parents who use BSL to be fully involved in their child's education
- ◆ expanding the teaching of BSL as a language to hearing pupils in schools
- ◆ improving the experience of students who use BSL, when they move from school to college, university, training and the world of work
- ◆ improving access to health care and mental health services in BSL;
- ◆ ensuring that every Scottish Government funded employment and training opportunity is accessible to BSL users\*, and that they are properly supported;
- ◆ building the skills of qualified BSL/English interpreters to work in specialist settings like health, mental health and justice
- ◆ removing obstacles to BSL users\* participating in politics and public life, for example by promoting the Access to Elected Office Fund, which can meet the costs of BSL interpreters for people wishing to stand for election in the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections

## **6. Employee Implications**

- 6.1. Employees will need to be fully aware of the plan and the range of interpretation and translation services available and how to best work with customers to ensure they receive a fair and equal level of access.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1. There are currently no financial implications arising from the plan.

## **8. Other Implications**

8.1. None

## **9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy or procedure and does not require an impact assessment.

8.2 The report does highlight issues that if taken forward can help the council meet its commitments as set out in the mainstreaming equalities report and will help us to continue to meet our Equality Duties.

**Paul Manning**

**Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)**

31 October 2017

### **Link(s) to Council Objectives**

- ◆ Fair and open
- ◆ People focused
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

### **Previous References**

**Equal Opportunities Forum - 15 March 2017**

### **List of Background Papers**

None

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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