

Joint Local British Sign Language Plan for Argyll and Bute

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish local plans every six years, showing how they will promote and support BSL. The Joint Local BSL Plan for Argyll and Bute 2018 – 2024 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The Joint Local plan sets out how we propose to use BSL in the operation of our functions; including communications with the public, key partners and our employees.

The Scottish Government provided the Council with £11,000 to develop its Local BSL Plan but no additional money to put it into practice. Where the implementation costs are known, these have been detailed in Appendix 4 to this report.

Demand for interpreting and translation services may increase as well as requests for deaf awareness and BSL training as a result of developing and promoting the BSL Plan.

The next set of plans is not due until 2024 when the Scottish Government will decide on the resources to be made available to named public bodies at that time.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Resources Committee are asked to recommend the approval of the Joint Local BSL Plan for Argyll and Bute 2018 – 2024 to Council.

Joint Local British Sign Language Plan for Argyll and Bute

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for British Sign Language (BSL) users to live, learn, work and visit. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish local plans every six years, showing how they will promote and support BSL. The Joint Local British Sign Language Plan for Argyll and Bute 2018 – 2024 (Appendix 1) has been put together with NHS Highland; liveArgyll (who are responsible for some of the goals listed under the Culture and Arts, and Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing sections) and input from BSL users and their representatives. This is Argyll and Bute Council's first local plan which also covers the Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment for the Plan is enclosed as Appendix 2 to this report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee are asked to recommend the approval of the Joint Local BSL Plan for Argyll and Bute 2018 – 2024 to Council.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 Legislation requires BSL users (including those who use the tactile form of the language) and those who represent them to be involved in developing the local BSL plan. The consultation on the draft plan must be accessible to Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and both the draft and final plans must be published in English and BSL. Public consultation on the draft plan ran from 2 August 2018 – 2 September 2018 inclusive and a summary of the responses received is attached to this report as Appendix 3. This summary will be published with the Joint Local Plan so that members of the public can see how their responses have influenced the final document and associated actions.
- 3.2 The Joint Local plan sets out how we propose to use BSL in the operation of our functions; including communications with the public, key partners and our employees. It has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out

in the 2015 Act, the National BSL Plan, and guidance provided by the BSL (Scotland) Act Partnership; particularly in relation to the development of BSL Plans.

Additional information about some of the actions contained within the Plan is provided in Appendix 4.

- 3.3 The actions detailed in the plan will be built in Pyramid, the Council's performance management system, and will be monitored on a regular basis. Progress will be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee once a year.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires named public bodies in Scotland (including Argyll and Bute Council) to publish local plans every six years, showing how they will promote and support BSL. The first local plans should be available by 31 October 2018 in both English and BSL. The final Joint local BSL plan for Argyll and Bute 2018 - 2024 sets out the collective intentions of Argyll and Bute Council, NHS Highland Health Board and liveArgyll to improve communication with, and access to services for, people who use BSL in the period 2018-2024. It has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the 2015 Act, the National BSL Plan, and guidance provided by the BSL (Scotland) Act Partnership; particularly in relation to the development of BSL Plans. The final plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Also accompanying this report is a summary of the feedback received during the public consultation on the draft BSL Plan (Appendix 3), and an Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment which has been informed by the outputs from the public consultation (Appendix 2). Appendix 4 provides some additional information on some of the actions listed in the Plan. These documents will be published on the Council's website together with the Joint Local Plan.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy When approved by the Council, the BSL Plan will become Council policy and have the formal endorsement of our senior management team and Elected Members. Its contents should also be taken into account when devising any council policies which may have an impact on BSL users.
- 5.2 Financial The Scottish Government provided the Council with £11,000 to develop the BSL Plan. There may be costs associated with its implementation. Demand for interpreting and translation services may increase as well as requests for deaf awareness and BSL training as a result of developing and promoting the BSL Plan.

The council already provides some BSL training to staff, and to hearing and deaf children in some schools. The council may receive requests from parents to provide free BSL courses for them, however it is important to note that no commitment to provide this has been made in the final plan. Argyll and Bute Council's Teacher of the Deaf helps families who use signing to learn it as part of her regular visits with them. The National Deaf Children's Society (Scotland) has previously funded family home signing sessions for three families within Argyll and Bute, as well as organising and delivering an online BSL Level 1 course at one of the schools within the area.

- 5.3 Legal The Council has a statutory duty to publish a BSL Plan in English and BSL by 31 October 2018. It also has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.4 HR Staff will be made aware of the BSL Plan and its associated activities. Deaf Awareness Training will be available for all employees to access.
- 5.5 Equalities The BSL Plan will help ensure that people whose first or preferred language is BSL can be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens, and able to make informed choices about every part of their lives.
- 5.6 Risk The Council would be breaching its statutory obligations if it does not publish a BSL Plan by October 2018.
- 5.7 Customer Service Implementation of the BSL Plan should result in improved access to services, information and communication for BSL users.

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director of Customer Services
Councillor Rory Colville, Policy Lead for Corporate Services
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For further information contact: Jane Fowler, Head of Improvement & HR,
Telephone: 01546 604466

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - Joint Local BSL Plan for Argyll and Bute, 2018 - 2024
- Appendix 2 - Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
- Appendix 3 - We asked, You Said, We Did – Analysis of responses to public consultation exercise
- Appendix 4 – Supplementary Information on Actions