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## **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) PLAN 2018-2024**

**Report by Service Director Customer and Communities**

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### **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**25 October 2018**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024, complying with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.**
- 1.2 The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 (the [BSL \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)) now requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years, showing how they will promote and support BSL. The overall aim of the Act is to make Scotland the best place in the world for (British Sign Language) BSL users to live, learn, work and visit.
- 1.3 The Council has taken a holistic approach to developing its BSL plan, with a focus on embedding BSL within its approach to customer services, communication, and training, and working with relevant Community Planning Partners including the local See Hear Group and the local BSL community and online consultation.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 I recommend that Scottish Borders Council approves the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 described in this report and attached in Appendix 1.**

### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Government published the [British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan 2017-2023](#) in October of 2017, as a requirement of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. Scottish Borders Council, like other public bodies (specifically NHS Borders and Borders College) is required to produce a BSL Plan 2018-2024 by October 2018. These plans must:
- Involve BSL users (including those who use the tactile form of the language) and those who represent them;
  - Ensure that the consultation on the draft plan is accessible to D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users; and
  - Be published in BSL as well as in English in both draft form, and in final form.
- 3.2 The legislation says that BSL plans should 'try to achieve consistency' with the BSL National Plan 2017-2023.
- 3.3 According to the 2011 Census, the Scottish Borders had **228** people aged 3 and over that identified that BSL was a language used at home. Given the very small BSL community in the Scottish Borders three local public bodies (Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and Borders College) agreed to have a joint approach to BSL Plan development.
- 3.4 The Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 was developed with input from:
- See Hear Strategy Group (acting as reference group)
  - Scottish Borders Council directorates
  - Live Borders
  - BSL community through an engagement day (Saturday 21 July 2018)
  - Online public consultation

### 4 SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) PLAN 2018-2024

- 4.1 The actions in the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 focus on embedding BSL within its approach to customer services, communication, and training. The actions are:
1. BSL Users are empowered to exercise their rights in accessing SBC Services and that staff are responsive in support of these rights.
  2. Raise staff awareness of BSL and [contact Scotland-BSL](#)
  3. Ensure all staff have access to relevant and appropriate training on BSL.
  4. Ensure BSL is embedded within SBC's new Customer Strategy, approved September 2018. (The Customer Strategy defines the ways in which customers will interact and do business with SBC over the next 5 years to meet changing expectations and needs, and to take full advantage of digital technology where appropriate).

5. Establish a clear Translation and Interpretation resource (which includes BSL) which is accessible by all services.
  6. Raise awareness in all schools that BSL is part of the 1+2 language policy. (The 1 + 2 Language policy is where children are taught two languages in addition to their mother tongue)
  7. BSL users are able to engage and participate in democracy and cultural events.
- 4.2 The Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 will be implemented across all council services and monitored by the Customer and Communities Directorate. It is important to note that the SBC BSL Plan 2018-2024 actions focus on embedding BSL within its approach to customer services, communication, and training, and working with relevant Community Planning Partners.
- 4.3 The local "See Hear" Group will continue to act as a reference group for the SBC BSL Plan and implementation.
- 4.4 Scottish Borders Council will contribute to the Scottish Government's national progress report in 2020, a requirement under the BSL (Scotland) Act.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

There is no identified budget for the implementation of the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024. The costs attached with these actions are to be incorporated into existing budgets. However, the Scottish Government allocated £11,000 to each Scottish Local Authority, including Scottish Borders Council, to fund the development of the local BSL plan. The Scottish Government has stated that residual funds from the £11,000 should be allocated to implementing the local BSL plan.

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

The development and implementation of Scottish Borders Council's British Sign Language (BSL) plan is a legislative requirement and part of the Council's equalities duty. To not develop and implement a BSL plan would be a legislative, equalities and reputational risk.

### **5.3 Equalities**

A full equality impact assessment (EIA) has been conducted and it indicates clear benefits to BSL Users and anticipates no adverse equalities implications. Indirectly the BSL Plan will also benefit others.

### **5.4 Acting Sustainably**

The actions of the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan will be implemented in a sustainable manner to improve fairness and equality of access to services and opportunities to engage and participate in public life for BSL users.

## 5.5 Carbon Management

There are no effects on carbon management as a result of this report.

## 5.6 Rural Proofing

The Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) plan focuses on fair and equitable access to services, opportunity for engagement and participation for BSL users regardless of where they live in the Scottish Borders.

## 5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes required to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan.

# 6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

6.2 Others consulted on the Scottish Borders Council British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2014 include:

- Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer – Human Resources
- Corporate Communications
- See Hear Strategy Group
- Internal BSL Plan Officer Group

**Approved by**

**Jenni Craig**

**Service Director Customer and Communities Signature .....**

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### Background Papers:

**Previous Minute Reference:** n/a

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Erin R. Murray can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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