

**Edinburgh Napier  
University**

**British Sign  
Language (BSL)  
Plan**

**October 2018 –  
September 2024**

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## SECTION 1

### 1 Introduction

Following the passing of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and the subsequent publication of the BSL National Plan (2017-2023) universities and colleges in Scotland were required to publish institutional plans by October 2018. At Edinburgh Napier we welcomed this opportunity to create a BSL Plan that demonstrates that the Deaf and Deafblind community and BSL users are welcomed and included at our University. The following sections outline our first institutional plan that will be implemented from October 2018 to September 2024.

To produce our plan we established a working group made up of a wide range of staff drawn from across the University's Schools and Professional Services and from the Edinburgh Napier Students' Association. In addition we benefitted by working closely with Deaf Action, in particular with Alison Hendry, Participation Officer, in developing our understanding of the challenges faced by the Deaf and Deafblind community when accessing public services and post-school education.

At Edinburgh Napier we are committed to maintaining and developing an inclusive culture that ensures we have a supportive environment for prospective and current staff and students, and members of the public. We aim to create an environment where everyone is aware of the support we offer and to ensure that services are accessible to all, ensuring that all members of our community are able to participate equally. Through the process of creating this plan it is clear that as an institution we have a desire to fulfil our institutional value of inclusion. The guidance provided has assisted us to focus our attention on the BSL and wider Deaf communities – and we hope that in delivering this plan we see a steady increase in BSL using students and staff join the University.

Our plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the National Plan, where these are relevant to our work, and we focus in particular on our duty to improve access to information and services for applicants, students, staff and members of the public; and secondly on our duty to support BSL users to succeed in higher education.

David Telford, Director of Information Services, Working Group Convenor

## 1.2 Background

The Scottish Government British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023 (<https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540>) sets out the aspiration that 'the Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit'. The Plan sets out the aim for higher education stating that students 'will be supported to transition to post- school education if they wish to do so and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s)'.

To deliver this aspiration universities are expected to develop, consult on and publish a clear, measurable plan, reviewed and renewed every 6 years.

The National Plan establishes the expectation that in Scotland BSL is recognised as a language in its own right and as a first or preferred language for BSL users from the D/deaf and Deafblind community. Alongside this recognition is the requirement to take forward tangible actions to ensure BSL<sup>1</sup> users full access to participate in society.

As part of our responsibilities we will report to the Scottish Government who aim to produce a national progress report in 2020. The BSL (Scotland) Act (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/11/contents/enacted>) requires universities to publish BSL plans which can show the involvement of BSL users; that we consulted on our draft plan and that it is published in BSL as well as English.

Our BSL Plan has been developed by a strongly engaged and participative working group convened by our Director of Information Services and supported by the Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion. Members of the group have come from across the university and our Student Association and included staff representing key university services as well as academic colleagues. A staff participation event succeeded in drawing together an even wider group of staff including those from many of our academic Schools, marketing and communications, student recruitment and admissions and human resources.

The purpose of the working group was to create an outline plan for approval by the University's Leadership team, publish the draft plan for consultation, and to make final amendments if necessary ahead of final publication in October 2018.

The plan to establish a working group was approved by the university's Student Experience Committee and the progress of the plan will be presented there and also to the University's Inclusion Committee from autumn 2018.

In developing our plan we sought to consult closely with our Participation Officer from Deaf Action and with her assistance published a draft plan in BSL and sought

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<sup>1</sup> We have followed the definition within the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 - wherever we refer to 'BSL users' we mean D/deaf and/or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language.

feedback from BSL users. The final version is available in both BSL and English from our web site. We intend to continue to consult with the BSL community over the duration of our first plan in order that we can continue to improve and refine our key actions.

At Edinburgh Napier we have extensive experience of supporting staff and students who disclose a disability and this includes those who apply to study here from the Deaf community. The production of this draft plan has assisted us to reflect further on what we need to do across the institution to continue to develop our capacity to deliver inclusive approaches to learning and teaching and to meet the needs of BSL users.

We hope that the combined impact of the work emanating from our plan at Edinburgh Napier and from across the nation will be to increase the participation rates of students who use BSL in higher education and also increase the numbers of BSL users who work for us.

### **1.3 Commenting on our plan**

Our plan is likely to develop and change over the next few years as we work on delivering the actions and priorities identified and we would like to invite feedback from members of the BSL community to help inform these changes. To provide feedback please contact our designated lead officer.

Mark Wilkinson, Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion is the designated lead officer involved in the delivery of this plan.

You can contact him by letter at:

6B18 Sighthill Campus

9 Sighthill Court

Edinburgh

EH11 4BN

Or by Email: [m.wilkinson@napier.ac.uk](mailto:m.wilkinson@napier.ac.uk)

His telephone number is: 0131 455 2902

BSL users can contact him via contactSCOTLAND-BSL, the on-line British Sign Language interpreting service.

### **1.4 Where to find the BSL version of this plan**

Our plan can be located in BSL from our web site: <https://www.napier.ac.uk/about-us/british-sign-language>

## SECTION 2:

### **Our Primary Goals**

Within our plan our primary goals are to:

- adopt an informed, participative and institution-wide approach to implementing our plan;
- build on and develop our existing approaches in support of BSL users – all prospective and current students and staff;
- improve and diversify our methods of communicating with BSL users;
- increase and improve access to information, advice and guidance for BSL users;
- contribute to national plan objectives where we identify synergies with our research and teaching.

Over the period of our institutional plan we will:

- Improve information and services for staff, students and prospective students who use BSL, including making our website and intranet more accessible to BSL users and provide accessible information about what BSL users can expect from the university.
- Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL'.
- Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training, and enable them to take up such training.
- Enable full access to Open and Applicant days for prospective students and their parents/supporters who use BSL.
- Provide support throughout the student journey for students who use BSL.
- Work with partners to provide support during key transition processes, in particular the transition into the University.
- Improve access to key information within the university campus.
- Consider and move forward actions through our curriculum and research activities in support of the 10 over-arching long term goals contained in the National Plan<sup>2</sup>.

The University's Inclusion Committee will assume an oversight role and receive annual updates on implementation of the plan. Responsibility for the on-going delivery of the plan will be assumed by a BSL plan delivery group.

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<sup>2</sup> See here for the BSL version of the National Plan: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGL-E01x3hH\\_Zycn2ZB056Q/featured?disable\\_polymer=1](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGL-E01x3hH_Zycn2ZB056Q/featured?disable_polymer=1)

## SECTION 3:

### **BSL LOCAL PLAN FOR EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY**

In producing our plan we have noted and responded to the guidance provided that suggests that we should ‘try to achieve consistency’ with the BSL National Plan.

The BSL National Plan is framed under ten long-term goals which were co-produced with BSL users across Scotland. It includes details of 70 actions that have become the primary focus for the plan and in due course we will explore in detail where we believe that Edinburgh Napier can make a significant contribution to these through our curriculum and research.

#### **3. 1. Across all our services**

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

*“Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users”*

#### **Our Actions**

By 2024, we will have:

1.1 Analysed the evidence we have about staff, students and prospective students who use BSL in our university; identified and filled key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress (on-going).

1.2 Improved the delivery of information and services for staff, students and prospective students who use BSL. We will have made our website more accessible to BSL users.

1.3 Promoted the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’, which allows BSL users to contact public sector services and for these services to contact them.

1.4 Signposted staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training, and enabled them to take up such training.

#### **3.2. Post-School Education**

We share the long-term goal for post-school education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

*“BSL users will be able to maximise their potential at school, will be supported to transition to post-school education if they wish to do so, and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s)”*

## **Our Actions**

By 2024, we will have:

2.1 Taken action to ensure that students and prospective students who use BSL are effectively supported. We will focus our attention on providing:

- accessible information about what BSL users can expect from Edinburgh Napier.
- full access to Open and Applicant days for prospective students who use BSL.
- support throughout the student journey for students who use BSL (including completing application forms, taking part in interviews, applying for Disabled Students Allowance etc) and to effectively access the curriculum.
- support for successful transition between school or college to Edinburgh Napier.
- access to information on our campuses.

2.2 Incorporated the guidance and advice produced by the Scottish Funding Council and others to ensure that across the University, staff are aware of their responsibilities towards BSL users, and that students who use BSL know what to expect.

2.3 Invited feedback from applicants, students and staff who use BSL after adopting this plan.

2.4 Reviewed and updated our plan annually and after the National Progress Report is published (due October 2020).

2.5 Provided assistance to students who use BSL to help them engage and benefit from all student support services.



<b>1. Increasing access to services for BSL users</b>				
<b>Identified Action</b>	<b>Current Position (June 2018)</b>	<b>Responsible Area/Officer</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p><b>1.1</b> Develop and implement a plan to ensure that all of our online communication is clear and accessible to BSL users.</p> <p>Develop a BSL section with links to videos for core web content.</p>	Current website has no BSL content	<p>Plan:</p> <p>Marketing and Communications; identified key local site users; Information Services; Human Resources and Development</p> <p>Online communications:</p> <p>Marketing and Communications</p> <p>Information Services</p> <p>School and Professional Services lead officers</p> <p>Human Resources and Development</p>	All core information required to understand and engage with the University includes BSL interpretation	<p>Plan developed by July 2020</p> <p>Core and priority information made accessible in BSL from December 2020</p> <p>Project completed by 2024</p>

<b>1.2</b> Embed contactScotland into our website and information on how to contact us via email signatures.	Not visible on current web pages; not widely promoted via email signatures	<p>Main webpages:</p> <p>Marketing and Communications</p> <p>School/Service webpages:</p> <p>local responsible officers</p> <p>All staff – incorporate into standard email signatures (similar to incorporation of charity status)</p> <p>Human Resources Communication team</p>	contactScotland link included on all relevant pages and email signatures	By December 2020
<b>1.3</b> Use of (filmed/video) visual media on web pages increasingly includes BSL interpretation.	Not currently present on web pages	Marketing and Communications	Visual media on web site increasingly includes BSL interpretation; staff add BSL interpretation to learning and teaching materials when required.	By Sep 2024
<b>1.4</b> Use of (filmed/video) visual media in learning and teaching materials increasingly includes BSL interpretation and always when required if BSL user on	Not present in filmed/visual teaching	Disability Inclusion/Department for Learning,	staff add BSL interpretation to learning and	From Sep 2018

the course. All new core modules in programmes will have BSL interpretation added as standard to filmed/visual materials.	materials and lack of capacity amongst staff to know how to add BSL interpretation to course materials.	Teaching and Assessment; Information Services; School Support and academic staff	teaching materials when required and as standard to all new core modules.	
<b>1.5</b> BSL interpretation at Applicant and Open days eg during welcome address.	Applicant/Open days currently don't routinely include BSL interpretation.	Recruitment and Admissions	BSL interpretation included.	From October 2018
<b>1.6</b> BSL interpretation at all graduations	Has been available for a number of years	Student Administration	BSL interpretation included.	Ongoing
<b>1.7</b> BSL interpretation is available and included at all major open University events – including Professorial inaugural lectures etc. and is easily bookable for all other University open events.	Has been bookable in the past but not promoted widely to the public.	Development and External Affairs; Marketing and Communications; relevant School or Professional Services Staff	All major open University events include BSL interpretation; all relevant staff know how to book BSL interpreters when required.	Included as standard from March 2020

<b>1.8</b> University wide staff meetings include BSL interpretation on some occasions to promote awareness of BSL to staff and about how to book BSL interpreters when required.	No BSL interpretation currently at staff meetings	Human Resources	Some open meetings have BSL interpretation	From October 2018 and ongoing
<b>1.9</b> Develop and implement a plan to ensure that applicants and students who use BSL are supported effectively throughout the student journey from entry to graduation and that effective transition into the University is prioritised and resourced.	Too few BSL using students to be certain that we have comprehensive support in place	Disability Inclusion; Student Accommodation; Widening Participation team; Placement team	BSL using students report high satisfaction with support and progress successfully through their studies in similar numbers to non-BSL students.	From October 2018
<b>1.10</b> Develop and implement a plan to ensure that new and current staff who use BSL are supported effectively throughout their time at the University – with a particular focus on their induction period.	Too few BSL using staff members to be certain that we have comprehensive support in place	Human Resources and Development; Department for Learning, Teaching and Assessment.	BSL using staff report high satisfaction with their employment experience.	From October 2018

<b>2. Training</b>				
<b>Identified Action</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Responsible Area/Officer</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>2.1</b> Deliver: (1) BSL awareness and entry level courses to staff and students (some targeted courses eg to i-point staff and student ambassadors) (2) BSL level one and in due course subsequent levels (some targeted)	Vast majority of staff and students have no knowledge of BSL	Human Resources; ENSA; BSL plan delivery group	Delivery and uptake of awareness and basic training opportunities; subsequent growth in capacity of the University to communicate in BSL	(1)From October 2018; (2) from September 2019
<b>2.2</b> Deliver 'Working with Interpreters' sessions	Very few staff and students have knowledge or experience of working with BSL/English interpreters	Disability Inclusion  Human Resources and Development	Delivery and uptake of training	From October 2018
<b>2.3</b> Increase awareness and understanding of how to source support for BSL users	Currently only available from the Disability Inclusion team	Human Resources; Disability	Information available and publicised in	From Sep 2019

		Inclusion; Delivery group	BSL and English	
<b>2.4</b> Produce an (1) Information guide on the BSL Act and our local plan for all staff to promote awareness, buy in and engagement. Promote awareness through a (2) programme of roadshows across our campuses.		BSL Plan delivery group  Marketing and Communications  Human Resources and Development	Guide available and publicised in BSL and English; roadshows delivered to a wide range of staff and students	(1)By April 2020; (2) from October 2020

<b>3. Using our Curriculum and Research Strengths to help deliver the National Plan</b>				
<b>Identified Action</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Responsible Area/Officer</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>3.1</b> Create a group to identify opportunities in support of the National Plan		BSL delivery group	Group created	By April 2020
<b>3.2</b> Deliver a report that identifies opportunities where our curriculum and research strengths can support the National Plan	Unclear at present where opportunities lie	BSL Curriculum and research group (reporting to BSL Plan delivery group)  Department for Learning, Teaching and Assessment	Report delivered in BSL and English	By September 2020
<b>3.3</b> Implement curricular recommendations from the report.		Key academic staff from Schools	Curriculum changes; adapted or established.	From September 2020
<b>3.4</b> Implement research projects where recommended		Key academic/research staff from Schools	Research projects initiated	From September 2020

<b>4. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>				
<b>Identified Action</b>	<b>Evidence Base</b>	<b>Responsible Area/Officer</b>	<b>Success Measure</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>4.1</b> Staff and students are aware of the BSL Local Plan and their role in delivery	Current marginal awareness	Marketing and Communications; Human Resources and Development; BSL Plan delivery group	At least 70% of staff are aware of the BSL Plan; at least 50% of students are aware of the Plan	measured annually in May (from May 2020)
<b>4.2</b> Analyse the evidence we have about staff, students and prospective students who use BSL in our university; identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress (on-going).	Current evidence weak as lack of current BSL using students and staff and weak links to the BSL community	BSL Plan delivery group	Increased awareness and understanding of the challenges and barriers experienced by BSL using students, staff and members of the BSL community; evidence incorporated into further iterations of our plan.	From October 2018 and on-going.
<b>4.3</b> Annual monitoring via University Inclusion committee		BSL Plan delivery group	Annual report to Inclusion Committee	annually



4.4 Public reporting every 2 years from 2020 on our BSL Local Plan		BSL Plan delivery group	Update report	2020
			midpoint report	2022
			Final report	2023
			New plan	2024
			All available in English and BSL video update	

#### **SECTION 4:**

Please contact Mark Wilkinson, designated contact, if you want to continue to be involved as we further develop/implement the actions in our plan.

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