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**British Sign Language (BSL) Plan**  
**2018-2024**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, learn, work and visit. They want BSL users to be involved in daily and public life and to be able to make informed choices about every part of their lives.

This is the BSL Plan for NHS Highland. It shows how we aim to improve communication and access to services for BSL users.

You can view the BSL version of this Plan at:

[www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/Publications/Pages/publicationsmain.aspx](http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/Publications/Pages/publicationsmain.aspx)

## **ENGAGEMENT, CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK**

NHS Highland want to thank all those who were involved in the engagement and consultation process, for example; the events on 14 July in Inverness, 24 July in Wick and 14 August 2018 in Argyll & Bute. These events were held to get views on the provision of BSL services within the Highland area. The views of the participants have helped to develop this Plan.

The NHS Highland Consultation BSL Draft Plan was issued on 23 August 2018. It was posted on the NHS Highland website and widely distributed to partner organisations and third sector organisations.

The finalised NHS Highland BSL Plan was formally approved at the Senior Management Team meeting on 20 September 2018.

## **NOTES**

1. This Plan does not include actions relating to School Education, Culture & the Arts and Justice as these actions in the BSL National Plan do not have implications for NHS Highland.
2. In this Plan where 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 of preferred language is British Sign Language.

## **ABOUT NHS HIGHLAND HEALTH BOARD**

NHS Highland Board is the largest and most sparsely populated Scottish Health Board area. It covers 41% of the country's landmass. The area covers 32,518 km<sup>2</sup>. We have difficult terrain, rugged coastlines, populated islands and a limited internal transport and communications infrastructure.

The Health Board include two local authority areas, Highland and Argyll & Bute. Our diverse area includes Inverness, one of the fastest growing cities in Western Europe and 36 populated islands – 23 in Argyll & Bute and 13 in Highland.

We provide health and social care services to our resident population of 320,000 and to the influx of tourists which come to the Highlands. At certain times of the year, tourists can double or even triple the local population.

The organisation provides services to patients and local communities through four main operational units - three geographical operational units and Raigmore Hospital.

The geographical operational units are:

- South and Mid Highland (covering Badenoch, Strathspey, Nairn, Inverness, East and Mid Ross);
- North and West Highland (covering Lochaber, Skye, Wester Ross, Caithness and Sutherland); and
- Argyll and Bute.

These operational units are supported by a range of Corporate Services including facilities, pharmacy, personnel, and finance.

Raigmore Hospital is the District General Hospital for north Highland. Most patients from Argyll and Bute are referred to Glasgow hospitals for secondary care.

NHS Highland is also a major employer, second only to the local authorities in the number of people employed. In business terms, this is of major significance to the Highland economy.

## **ABOUT HIGHLAND HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP**

Integration of health and social care brings about significant changes to the way services are delivered, to help bring long-term sustainability to services and improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland. It places greater emphasis on supporting people in their own homes and communities and reducing inappropriate hospital and care home use.

Local Authorities and NHS Boards created formal partnership arrangements (Integration Authorities) to integrate the planning, management and delivery of adult health and social care services (including some hospital services). These arrangements can either be in the form of a body corporate model (known as an Integrated Joint Board) or a lead agency model.

Highland is the only partnership that has adopted the lead agency model. Under this model NHS Highland are responsible for Adult Health and Social Care Service and Highland Council are responsible for Children's Health. Highland Council and NHS Highland integrated health and social care services for children and adults in April 2012.

## **ABOUT ARGYLL & BUTE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP**

Argyll & Bute adopted the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) model. Under this model Argyll & Bute IJB is responsible for children's health and social care services, criminal justice social work and all acute services.

It is estimated there are 86,890 people living in Argyll and Bute. It is sparsely populated over 5 main settlements and 23 inhabited islands (13 persons per km<sup>2</sup> compared to the Scottish average of 69 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (2015)). 52% of Argyll's population live in 'rural' areas and 17% on the islands (Scottish Government 2013-14). This results in a complex network for NHS service provision and referral pathways.

Whilst part of NHS Highland local services in Argyll and Bute have referral pathways to services in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Oban has an audiology department which covers the majority of Argyll, whereas as Helensburgh and Cowal (East side of Argyll and Bute) refer to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow for these services. This is a similar geographical split for the majority of NHS services with Glasgow providing Consultant Services in the specialities that are not provided locally across Argyll and Bute.

Some BSL users who are patients in Oban are offered the option of going north to link with the Inverness services via satellite consultant clinics in Fort William.

## **SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PLAN**

This Plan follows the BSL National Plan published 24 October 2017. It was developed through extensive engagement with D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them ([www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540)).

Both at national level and local level there is commitment to promoting and supporting BSL users.

NHS Highland has a history of taking a partnership approach with other local organisations. Whilst preparing our first Plan, we have again worked closely with partner organisations including:-

- Highland Council
- Argyll & Bute HSCP
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise

We believe that partnership working makes common sense as we are all working to deliver services and support local communities.

According to the 2011 Census the population in Highland was 232,132 and the number of people with hearing loss was 16,249. This is 7.0% of the population.

We also worked closely with D/deaf, Deafblind people, carers and those with a shared interest. We did this through a series of engagement and consultation events and opportunities.

NHS Highland would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who contributed and helped us produce a Plan which aims to:-

3. Improve access to a wide range of information and public services in BSL
4. Improve access to health care and mental health services in BSL
5. Build the skills of qualified BSL/English interpreters to work in specialist settings like health and mental health
6. Promote the use and understanding of BSL

We have an existing partnership and service level agreement with Highland Council. This enables us to provide BSL interpretation and translation to anyone who requires support when accessing our services or attending appointments. We recognise that it is important to have effective communication. For all patients/service users who have sensory impairment (sight, hearing, multi-sensory), we aim to overcome any communication challenges. This can include provision of face to face interpreting.

We have also been using and promoting communication via **contactSCOTLAND-BSL**. This is an online interpreting video relay service (VRS) which enables BSL users to contact public and third sector services and vice versa.

Whilst **contactSCOTLAND-BSL** will not remove the need for face to face interpreting provision, it will increase telephone accessibility between BSL users and service providers.

One of the main aims of the Scottish Government National Plan is to increase awareness of and use of contactSCOTLAND-BSL as a means of communication. Patients/service users who have used contactSCOTLAND-BSL have reported that it provided them with:

- Access to a remote interpreter within their own home within minutes
- The option of male or female interpreter
- Anonymity when accessing services (avoids the need to rely on friends or family members for sensitive matters)
- Access to a range of public bodies and third sector organisations
- Access to NHS 24 when their GP surgery is closed

contactSCOTLAND-BSL can also help non-BSL using deaf people with making and understanding calls.

More information on how to register for contactSCOTLAND-BSL and frequently asked questions and answers can be found at <https://contactscotland-bsl.org>

## **BSL PLAN FOR NHS HIGHLAND**

Each of the six sections below set out what NHS Highland will do over the next six years. Some of the actions we have identified are similar to those identified by other partners. We will continue working in partnership to achieve any joint actions that have been identified.

### **Across all our services**

#### **We agree with the BSL National Plan which says:**

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



### **NHS Highland Actions**

#### **By 2024, we will:**

1.1 - Work with partners to promote the use of the Scottish Government’s free BSL online interpreting video relay service, contactSCOTLAND-BSL

- Promote use of contact SCOTLAND-BSL within our services.
- Train staff how and when to use contact SCOTLAND-BSL.
- Improve awareness of the service with BSL users and non-BSL users.

1.2 - Continue to promote the Communication Support Service.

1.3 - Work with partners to signpost staff who work with BSL users to BSL awareness training. We will do this by:-

- Promoting See Hear Highland Education & Learning Services (SHHELS) to NHS staff and partner agencies.
- Promoting BSL classes to staff.

1.4 - Use existing information and gather new information about BSL users to improve support and access to our services. We will do this by:-

- Monitoring uptake of our BSL services, including:
  - » Requests for translations and interpretation services.
  - » Downloads of BSL material from our website.
  - » Uptake by NHS staff of learning via our online learning system (LearnPro)
- Analysing evidence of BSL use to inform further development of our plan.

1.5 - Continue to explore using technology in meeting communication support requirements.

1.6 - Work with BSL users, partners and the wider community to continue to develop printed guidance and information in plain English and easy to read formats.

1.7 - Promote services available among the BSL community by using social media.

1.8 - Support qualified BSL/English interpreters to build their skills in specialist settings like health and mental health.

1.9 - Work with partners to engage with BSL users and members of the Deaf community to give updates on BSL Plans at least once per year.

## Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

### We agree with the BSL National Plan which says:

“The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a D/deaf or Deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL.”



## NHS Highland Actions

### By 2024, we will:

- 2.1 - Make available information about BSL, Deaf culture and resources in BSL and/or any easy to read format accessible to early years staff.
- 2.2 - Assist parents, family members and carers to get access to BSL nationally developed resources (such as Bookbug).
- 2.3 - Signpost parents, family members and carers to BSL courses.

## Training, Work and Social Security

### We agree with the BSL National Plan which says:

“BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish workforce, so that they can fulfil their potential, and improve Scotland’s economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career.”



## NHS Highland Actions

### By 2024, we will:

- 3.1 - Work with partners who deliver employment services to access information about the needs of BSL users.
- 3.2 - Work with partners who work with employer groups to access information about the needs of BSL users.
- 3.3 - Raise awareness of the UK Government’s Access to Work (AtW) Scheme with BSL users so that they can benefit from the support it provides.



## Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

### We agree with the BSL National Plan which says:

“BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives, and to make informed choices at every stage of their lives.”



### NHS Highland Actions

**The lead agency model means that NHS Highland is commissioned to deliver adult services in Highland. Highland Council are commissioned to delivery children’s services. By 2024, we will:**

4.1 - Signpost BSL users to health and social care information produced by NHS Health Scotland and NHS24 supporting;

- Bowel, Breast and Cervical screening programmes.
- Childhood and Seasonal Flu immunisation programmes.

4.2 - Publicise the learning resources for health and social care staff developed by NHS Health Scotland and See Hear Highland Education & Learning Services (SHHELS).

4.3 - Work with the Deaf community and partners to develop resources and information in formats that are easy to access and understand.

4.4 - Work with the Deaf community and partners to develop the NHS Highland website. We will make this more accessible to D/deaf, hard of hearing and people who are speech impaired by including signed videos. These may include information on:

- what services are available
- how to access services
- how to make a complaint

4.5 - Investigate technology enabled systems such as telehealth applications to support people to self-manage long term conditions at home.

4.6 - Review what Mental Health support is available to the Deaf community.

4.7 - Promote signposting BSL users to out of hours support for example Breathing Space and NHS 24.

4.8 - Support and work with NHS Health Scotland to implement a new national Interpretation and Translation Policy which includes BSL provision.

4.9 - Aim to ensure that patients’ communication and access needs are recorded at the first available opportunity. We will also ask for permission to share that information across NHS Highland where relevant.

4.10 - Investigate creating alternative communication methods. For example, by giving the option to text, email or use contactSCOTLAND-BSL when confirming appointments.

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4.11 - Promote Deaf awareness training available from See Hear Highland Education & Learning Services (SHHELS) for independent contractors e.g. GPs, Pharmacists, Optometrists, Dentists.

4.12 - Promote text service for Deaf, hard of hearing or people who are speech impaired to contact the emergency services. We will do this by linking the emergency SMS website to NHS Highland website; [http://www.emergencysms.org.uk/registering\\_your\\_mobile\\_phone.php](http://www.emergencysms.org.uk/registering_your_mobile_phone.php)

4.13 - Work with partners to make sure that any local work to deal with social isolation explicitly considers the needs of BSL users.

4.14 - Work with partners to review public protection information. We will provide key messages in formats that are easy to access and understand.

4.15 - Monitor uptake of e-modules on learnPro which is a NHS staff training resource.

## Transport

We agree with the BSL National Plan which says:

“BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland.”



## NHS Highland Actions

By 2024, we will:

5.1 - Promote BSL awareness training to regulated transport service providers, such as hospital taxi provision and patient transport.

5.2 - Encourage private transport providers contracted by NHS Highland to have access to technology to support communication with BSL users. We will also encourage them to be Deaf aware.

## Democracy

### We agree with the BSL National Plan which says:

“BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Scotland, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies.”



## NHS Highland Actions

### By 2024, we will:

6.1 - Raise awareness among our executive and non-executive Board members about contactSCOTLAND-BSL.

6.2 - Work with partners to develop and promote accessible guidelines for activities and events..

## NEXT STEPS

- We will conduct a review and report on the progress of the final Local Plan in 2020.
- We will also contribute to the national progress report in 2020.
- We welcome any feedback, comments and suggestions at any stage/time.

## NOTES

## NOTES



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