

Board of Management

Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 28 May 2024
Paper No.	LTSEC4-J
Agenda Item	5.1
Subject of Paper	British Sign Language (BSL) Action Plan
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Derek Robertson
Date of production	19 April 2024
Action	For Noting

1. Recommendations

To note the report.

2. Purpose

This paper is intended to inform the Committee of the renewed College BSL plan and the steps being taken in implementation and evaluation of success.

3. Consultation

Consultation to ensure the BSL Action Plan accurately reflects the priorities of BSL users, was undertaken with both staff and students who use BSL and people who represent users of BSL. In addition, the BSL Network was established and engaged internal partners (Learning

Support, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Organisational Development, Students' Association, Corporate Communications, Health and Safety) and external partners (Deaf Action, Solar Bear and St Rochs School).

4. Key Insights

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 requires listed authorities in Scotland to publish plans every six years, showing how they will promote, and facilitate the promotion of the use and understanding of BSL in Scotland.

In November 2023 the Scottish Government published the [British Sign Language \(BSL\): national plan 2023 to 2029](#). In response to this, the College's new BSL Action Plan 2023-2029 reflects the core themes of the National Plan and illustrates our ambitious aim of becoming Scotland's leading college for BSL users. The Action Plan aligns with our wider commitment to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students, regardless of background. The action plan is presented in Appendix 1.

5. Impact and Implications

The BSL Action Plan 2023-2029 allows the College to ensure that we remain an inclusive and supportive place to learn and enables us to fulfil our obligations under the BSL Scotland Act (2015).

There are no additional resources implications - the action plan will be implemented and managed by the BSL Intervention Team, supported by the BSL Network and assisted by the Learning Support Team.

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL)

PLAN 2024-2029

City of Glasgow College

BSL Intervention Team

The British Sign Language National Plan 2023-2029, launched by the Scottish Government, highlights the goal of making Scotland a place where BSL users can "live, work, visit and learn."

(Scottish Government, 2023-2029)

Introduction

City of Glasgow College (COGC) is firmly committed to promoting and supporting the use and understanding of British Sign Language (BSL) within its college community. The approach taken by the college is driven by both the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and the British Sign Language National Plan 2023-2029.

The National Plan emphasises the importance of locally developed action plans. As such, COGC is required to publish a new plan every six years, outlining concrete steps to achieve BSL accessibility goals. Building on the successes of the previous plan, the updated action plan outlines our commitment to improving the experience of BSL users in City of Glasgow College. It reflects on the lessons learned from our previous plan and establishes new key priorities.

Our new BSL Action Plan 2023-2029 reflects the core themes of the National Plan and illustrates our ambitious aim of becoming Scotland's leading college for BSL users. The Action Plan aligns with our wider commitment to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students, regardless of background. The plan priorities intend to ensure an environment where BSL users feel supported and empowered to participate fully in the learning experience.

The Action Plan focuses on delivering long-lasting, positive change for BSL users, extending its impact beyond the 2029 timeframe. We are confident that through our commitment to collaboration and inclusivity, this crucial initiative will be a success.

Throughout this Plan we will refer to BSL users, this phrase refers to the broader categories listed: Deaf, BSL users, Deafblind, Deafened and Hard of Hearing.

Alternative Versions: The BSL version of the City of Glasgow College Action Plan is available on the [City of Glasgow College Website \(link\)](#).

Context

**“We use Deaf with a capital D
to refer to people who have
been deaf all their lives.”**

(Sign Health

what is the difference between deaf and Deaf

2023, October 26)

City of Glasgow College is committed to recognising British Sign Language (BSL) as a thriving and distinct language with its own grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. This understanding underpins our ongoing mission to empower BSL users within the college community.

COGC recognise the importance and contribution of Deaf voices, and to ensure our BSL Action Plan accurately reflects the priorities of BSL users, the Learning Support Team have actively consulted with both staff and students who use BSL and people who represent users of BSL (Communication Support Workers / Sign Language Interpreters), which has informed the new plan. These discussions focused on two key areas: accessibility of existing support throughout the student learning journey, and communication support that best enables BSL users to excel in a learning environment.

Before moving forward into the new plan, we look back and reflect on achievements and lessons learnt over the last six years. The new plan outlines our priorities, aims, and the specific objectives we will pursue to achieve meaningful change. The plan also identifies clear lines of responsibility and suggested timelines.

The City of Glasgow College BSL Action Plan Intervention Team will be responsible for monitoring the plan's implementation and ensuring effective reporting to relevant committees. The intervention team will create opportunities for reflection, learning, and sharing knowledge by ensuring contribution from BSL users and staff who support BSL users and strive to develop practices that will ensure effective communication and accessibility for all BSL users.

The COGC 2024 BSL Action Plan will create opportunities for BSL users and City staff to work in partnership to influence practice, ensure accessibility, improve the student experience and celebrate Deaf culture. The plan intends to foster an inclusive learning environment where all BSL users can fully participate and reach their full potential.

Organisational Change

City of Glasgow College has made significant progress since the publication of the 2018 BSL Plan and has mainstreamed practice to ensure accessibility and positive experiences for British Sign Language (BSL) users. Operational change, developments and good practice includes:

Recruitment

- Students who identify as D/deaf or Hard of Hearing in their application are offered a Communication Support Worker at interview stage and to attend pre-entry events. Reasonable Adjustments are in place from Welcome Week.
- The Student Experience Directorate employ two Learning Support & Development Advisors who are Deaf BSL users and are supported via Access to Work to undertake their role.
- 50% of the College Communication Support Workers are Children of Deaf Adult's (CODA).

Support and Wellbeing

- Communication Support Workers and Sign Language Interpreters are made available to support students participate in societies, careers events, support and guidance or counselling.

Health & Safety

- Specific fire alert arrangements are in place for BSL users.
- The College is accessible to BSL users via contactSCOTLAND.

Learning Support

- Communication Support Workers and/or Sign Language Interpreters are available as required to support the needs assessment process.
- Specialist equipment loan is available together with specialist assistive technology.
- D/deaf knowledge sharing sessions are offered to staff and students who have BSL users in the learning environment.
- Since 2021, BSL users have benefitted from 100% coverage by Communication Support Workers (Via College staff and external partners).

Staff CPD

- An Introduction to BSL is included within the College Staff Integration process.
- BSL language Level 1 and 2 training courses are facilitated twice a year and offered to staff, volunteers and elected officers.

Looking Back

City of Glasgow College Learning Support Department undertook a comprehensive review of the 2018-2024 action plan with both staff and students who use BSL, and people who represent users of BSL. Data gathered informed the selection of objectives for the updated plan.

City of Glasgow College Services – (2018 – 2024) Action Plan Review

A collaborative effort between IT, Admissions and the Learning Support Team resulted in the creation of an alert system to identify applications disclosing D/deaf or Hard of Hearing status. This system helps facilitate early interventions and support for BSL users.

Staff who regularly interact with BSL users were supported to pursue BSL qualifications through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities. (How many) To promote inclusive practice future training opportunities will be facilitated.

Applications from D/deaf or Hard of Hearing students are fast-tracked to ensure timely scheduling of needs assessment meetings and if required, support to complete Disabled Students Allowance applications, ensuring needs are anticipated and reasonable adjustments in place for course commencement.

To enhance the ability to support students effectively through the induction process. Communication Support Workers and Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) are granted access to transitions information in advance. BSL users have benefited from transition planning and employment support. Additionally, assistance has been offered to BSL users to complete university statements.

While previous attempts have encountered challenges, the Learning Support Team and the Student Engagement Team have successfully established a Student Accessibility Network. The network plays a vital role in encouraging BSL users to develop friendships and access peer support.

The BSL working group developed a helpful video about the student funding application process. To further develop inclusive information about support services, a programme of BSL videos will be developed and available via the college website and other platforms.

Introductory BSL training was delivered to staff, with participation notably lower among Reception, Estates, and Catering departments. To foster a more inclusive environment, the intervention team will encourage broader participation in future training initiatives. (How many)

The college has consistently ensured accessibility for BSL users at college events by providing Sign Language Interpreters. City of Glasgow College (COGC) will continue to ensure the needs of BSL users are met via the provision of Communication Support Workers and Sign Language Interpreters.

The practice of including contact SCOTLAND information in email communications has been adopted by many staff members. To maintain a truly inclusive environment for BSL users a programme of awareness raising campaigns will be facilitated.

Moving Forward

The City of Glasgow College BSL Action Plan 2024-2029 was agreed through consultation with the newly established BSL Network. The Network is a group of proactive staff and students who are committed to improving the experience of BSL users working and learning at City. Individuals within the group will act as an advisory forum to the BSL Intervention Team offering support and guidance required to achieve the plan objectives.

Priority 1			
Implement the City of Glasgow College BSL Action Plan.			
Aim:			
We will work in partnership to improve the experience of BSL users by using data to influence practice and embed BSL in relevant college plans, policies, procedures and operational delivery.			
Ref	Objective	Timescale	Responsibility
1.1	Establish a BSL intervention team that will include membership from staff and students who use BSL to drive the ambitions and objectives of the BSL plan. In addition, the intervention team will facilitate discussions and share knowledge required to improve the experience of BSL users.	June 2024	Student Experience Directorate / BSL Network
1.2	Ensure effective and regular data gathering about the BSL user experience, using information gathered to influence practice and identify further objectives.	July 2024	Student Experience Directorate / BSL Intervention Team
1.3	Facilitate opportunities for BSL users to identify challenges and service gaps and to identify actions for change that will enhance the experience of BSL users.	Ongoing	Student Experience Directorate
1.4	Submit progress reports (yearly) to relevant committees and appropriate forums, reflecting on progress made.	Ongoing	BSL Intervention Team
1.5	Include BSL as a consideration within the Equality Impact Assessment.	December 2024	BSL Intervention Team / Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team

Priority 2

Ensure an inclusive and accessible experience for BSL users at City of Glasgow College.

Aim:

We will work alongside the Deaf community and college partners to remove accessibility as a barrier for BSL users.

Ref	Objective	Timescale	Responsibility
2.1	Improve information provision for BSL users. Ensuring college information, platforms, and websites are accessible and BSL alternatives are available where relevant.	December 2025	Student Experience Directorate / Corporate Communications / Libraries / Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team
2.2	Develop Guidance for College Staff around best practice expected when working with BSL users (Inclusive Experience Guides).	January 2025	Student Experience Directorate / Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team/ Libraries
2.3	Implement a programme of knowledge sharing (Deaf Awareness) for staff and students who teach and learn alongside BSL users.	Ongoing	Organisational Development / People and Culture
2.4	Deliver a programme of training (BSL Introduction) to front facing support and lecturing staff. In addition, continue to facilitate BSL Level I / II when requested.	Ongoing	Organisational Development / People and Culture
2.5	Ensure that the academic and practical needs of BSL users are included as part of the development and implementation of a Reasonable Adjustments Policy.	June 2025	Academic Faculties / Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team / People and Culture - Health and Safety
2.6	Facilitate an information campaign to promote the use of contactSCOTLAND BSL / Sign Live.	August 2024	Student Experience Directorate / People and Culture - Front of House
2.7	Access to appropriate assistive technology to support communication.	August 2024	Learning and Teaching Academy
2.8	Raise awareness of the UK Government 'Access to Work' scheme.	Ongoing	Human Resources

Priority 3			
Improve the Student Experience for BSL users at City of Glasgow College.			
Aim:			
We will strive to provide a positive student experience for BSL users.			
Ref	Objective	Timescale	Responsibility
3.1	Provide a single point of contact for student BSL users.	August 2024	Student Experience Directorate
3.2	Ensure all BSL users are appropriately needs assessed by a BSL user, ensuring their learning and teaching support is in place and is reviewed when appropriate.	January 2025	Academic Faculties / Learning Support
3.3	Ensure all methods of learning and assessment (digital / hybrid) are appropriate and valuable to BSL users.	Ongoing	Academic Faculties / Learning and Teaching Academy
3.4	Work in partnership to ensure all BSL users have an opportunity to contribute to college quality systems.	Ongoing	Performance
3.6	Offer translation support to BSL users as required to undertake self-directed study.	August 2024	Student Experience Directorate

Priority: 4			
Celebrate BSL Culture at City of Glasgow College.			
Aim:			
To actively integrate BSL culture into college life, fostering awareness and appreciation within the wider community.			
Ref	Objective	Timescale	Responsibility
4.1	Proactively promote BSL knowledge sharing throughout the year by actively participating in relevant national awareness days and weeks.	Ongoing	Corporate Communications / Student Experience Directorate
4.2	Work in partnership with external organisations to host BSL cultural events on campus.	Ongoing	Corporate Communications / Student Experience Directorate
4.3	Develop a 'positive role models campaign' to support BSL users experience a positive transition.	August 2025	BSL users / Student Experience Directorate / Students' Association
4.3	Ensure BSL communication support (for staff, students, and guests) at college events and activities.	Ongoing	Human Resources / Corporate Communications / Student Experience Directorate

BSL Network and Intervention Team

BSL Action Plan Lead Officer: Nancy Mitchinson: Learning Support Manager

Achievement of the BSL Action plan will be supported and influenced by:

Claire Carney – Vice Principal Student Experience

Derek Robertson – Director Student Experience

Sandra Cook – Head of Student Development

Nancy Mitchinson – Learning Support Manager

Charlene Dolan – Learning Support & Development Advisor

Sandra Boyle – Learning Support & Development Advisor

Lindsay Duncan – Student Experience Digital Communications Officer

Lucy Treasure – Student Association Coordinator

Ciara McCarthy – Student President

AnnMarie Agnew – T / Sign Language Interpreter

Scott Harrison – Organisational Development Manager

Naira Dar – Equality, Diversion & Inclusion Manager

Will McLeish – Communications Director

Debbie Gordon – Health & Safety Manager

Pamela Marshall – Front of House Manager

Penny Robertson – Libraries Manager

Charlotte Addison – Deaf Action Representative

Alice Muir – Solar Bear Representative

Melissa Millan – St Roch's Academy Representative

To get involved and or contribute your ideas get in touch:

Contact Us

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