UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction
The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Scottish Higher Education Institutions to publish British Sign Language plans (in English and BSL) every six years, setting out how they will promote and support students who use BSL as their first, or preferred, language (including in its tactile form). Plans should convey a clear, measurable commitment to improvement where necessary in line with the BSL National Plan which is available to view at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540/0.

Informed by the guidance from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), advice from Deaf Action, reflection on the University’s Outcome Agreement, Equality Outcomes 2017-21 and in consultation with Deaf and Deafblind1 BSL users, our BSL plan is consistent with that of the BSL National Plan, published in 2017, in that it is framed around four long-term goals and fourteen supporting actions which we will take over the period 2018-2024. As part of our commitment to continued engagement around a) implementing actions and b) providing feedback on progress, we will contribute to a national progress report in 2020.

The University of Stirling is committed to protecting and supporting BSL, including in its tactile form, and in order to consult with and involve the BSL community in the development of our plan, we hosted an engagement event on Wednesday 27 June 2018 in collaboration with Forth Valley College. In addition to this we worked in partnership with Universities and Colleges across Glasgow to consult with BSL users at an event on 25 August 2018. The lessons learned through these consultation events have shaped our British Sign Language Plan.

A number of the actions are intended to support the University to better understand the BSL community and the community’s needs in order to enhance support and remove barriers to BSL users engaging with the University of Stirling as staff, students and visitors.

1.2 Name and contact details of lead officer
• Edna Docherty, Policy & Planning Officer – hd2@stir.ac.uk

1.3 Where to find the BSL version of this plan
The BSL version of this plan can be found on the University of Stirling website at: https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/stirling/services/policy-and-planning/documents/British-Sign-Language-Action-Plan.pdf

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1 Wherever the plan refers to ‘BSL users’ this includes D/deaf and/or Deafblind people who first of preferred language is British Sign Language.
2.1: 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 2023, we will:

[1] analyse the existing evidence we have about staff and students and prospective staff and students who use BSL in our university and measure how we are making progress [BSL Nation Plan aim 2]

[2] improve information and services for students and prospective students who use BSL2, including making our website more accessible to BSL users.

[3] promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’. [BSL Nation Plan aim 5]

[4] Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training, and enable them to take up such training. [BSL Nation Plan aim 6]
2.2: School Education

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

*Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child’s education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school.*

**By 2023, we will:**

[5] Work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to remove barriers that make it difficult for BSL Users to become registered teachers. [*BSL Nation Plan aim 16*]

[6] Undertake additional investigations into the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff working with Deaf and Deafblind pupils in schools. [*BSL Nation Plan aim 17*]
2.3: 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 2023, we will:**

[7] Publish our BSL Action Plan, setting out how students who use BSL are supported, with a clear measurable commitment to improvement where necessary. (Linked to Outcome Agreements to ensure that inequalities experienced by D/deaf and Deafblind BSL students are being addressed.)

[BSL Nation Plan aim 25, 27]

[8] Explore actions to support transition which might include:

- Visual media on prospective student-facing webpages to use BSL or to be subtitled
- Awareness raising/training for recruitment and admissions staff on using the Contact Scotland Service
- Inclusion of Contact Scotland Service on the ‘Contact Us’ section on recruitment and admissions pages and on email footers
- Availability of BSL Interpreter at key recruitment events e.g. Open Days, Applicant Visit Days
- Training for frontline student support services staff in BSL
2.4 Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

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

*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.*

**Our Actions:**

**By 2023, we will:**

[9] Ensure that – in line with Scotland’s Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 – BSL users should get the right help at the right time, expect recovery and fully enjoy their rights free from discrimination and stigma. *[BSL National Plan aim 45]*

*This may include actions such as:*

- Develop and implement a Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Implement our Prevention of Sexual Violence & Tackling Misconduct Strategy

[10] Work with the Sports’ Union and sport bodies on campus including ‘sportscotland’ to improve access to information and sporting opportunities for BSL users  *[BSL National Plan aim 48]*
2.5 Culture and the Arts

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

*BSL Users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, and an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf culture with the people of Scotland.*

**Our Actions:**

**By 2023, we will:**

[11] Enable BSL Users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals. [*BSL National Plan aim 54*]

[12] Support professional pathways to enable BSL Users to consider a career in culture and the arts. [*BSL National Plan aim 55*]

[13] Increase information in BSL about culture and the arts on websites and at venues. [*BSL National Plan aim 56*]

[14] Improve access to historical environment, and cultural events, and performing arts and film for BSL Users. [*BSL National Plan aim 57*]
SECTION 3: MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 British Sign Language Steering Group

The University of Stirling British Sign Language Plan will be monitored and overseen by the University of Stirling British Sign Language Steering Group.

The principal role of the BSL Steering Group is to ensure that the University meets its duties in order to comply with the Scottish Government's expectations, i.e.:

- Agree long-term goals and relevant actions in order to improve access to services for deaf and deaf-blind people
- Oversee the development of a BSL Action Plan for 2018 - 2024
- Oversee arrangements for consultation/engagement with the BSL community in collaboration with Forth Valley College
- Ensure that the consultation on draft plan is accessible to deaf and deafblind BSL users
- Ensure that BSL users, including those with a visual impairment, are able to comment on the draft plan before it is finalised
- Promote and support BSL

The composition of the BSL Steering Group will be:

- Head of Policy and Planning
- Dean for Equality & Diversity
- Artistic Director, MacRobert Arts Centre
- Head of Customer Services, Information Services
- Organisation & Development Partner, HR & OD
- Director of Admissions and Access
- Head of Careers & Employability Services
- Head of Accessibility and Inclusion, Student Support Services
- Student Support Services Representative
- Students’ Union President
- Communications, Marketing & Recruitment Representative
- Academic Registrar
- Policy & Planning Officer

The BSL Steering Group will report to Equality Steering Group as required.

3.2 Monitoring and development

Each action outlined in the University of Stirling BSL Plan identified a ‘lead officer’ who will have primary responsibility for taking forward that action. It is anticipated that lead officers will be asked to update the BSL Steering Group on an annual basis with the progress that has been achieved.
The BSL Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and presented to Equality Steering Group in September each year. The Plan should be made available in an appropriate method for BSL users to comment on the developing plan and actions each year.