

NHS Ayrshire & Arran



Meeting:	Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board
Meeting date:	Tuesday 26 March 2024
Title:	Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2024-2030
Responsible Director:	Jennifer Wilson, Nurse Director
Report Author:	Elaine Savory, Equality and Diversity Adviser

1. Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Decision

This paper relates to:

- Legal requirement

This aligns to the following NHSScotland quality ambition(s):

- Person Centred

2. Report summary

2.1 Situation

The Scottish Government published the second BSL National Plan 2023 – 2029 on 6 November 2023. The [BSL \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires listed authorities to publish their Authority Plans (also known as ‘BSL plans’) within six months of the publication of the BSL National Plan, and therefore listed authorities are required to publish their Authority Plans by 6 May 2024. As this deadline is established by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, no extensions are possible.

It should be noted that the BSL (Scotland) Act gave listed authorities 12 months to publish their first BSL plan, which runs from October 2018 to October 2024. Public bodies had not appreciated the altered six month timeline for subsequent plans set out in the legislation and only became aware of this at the end of November 2023.

There is no requirement for the BSL local plan to replicate the ambitions set out within the BSL National Plan 2023 – 2029. The Scottish Government encourages all listed authorities to consider the needs of BSL users in their local area to ensure that their plans meet the priorities of local BSL users. However, the Act stipulates that listed authorities are to try to achieve consistency between their plan and the most recently published National Plan.

This paper presents the Ayrshire Shared BSL local plan 2024-2030 for Members approval.

2.2 Background

The Scottish Parliament passed the BSL (Scotland) Act in September 2015. The Act lays the foundation for future improvements for D/deaf and DeafBlind BSL users. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 places a duty on all public bodies to promote and facilitate the promotion of BSL within their areas of responsibility. After the passing of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, a National Advisory Group (NAG) was established. The NAG consisted of representatives from the D/deaf and Deafblind community who use BSL and representatives from key public bodies in Scotland. This group was established to support the production of the first BSL National Plan which was published on 24 October 2017.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 also places a duty on all public bodies to promote and facilitate the promotion of BSL within their areas of responsibility. To do this, many public bodies, including NHS Ayrshire & Arran, were required to develop and produce a six year BSL local plan by 24 October 2018, and subsequent plans thereafter.

2.3 Assessment

The report attached at **Appendix 1** is the proposed written English version of the second Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan. Due to the shared nature of the report, the language used covers work undertaken by NHS Ayrshire & Arran as well as areas of work covered by the partners involved. Once the report narrative has been approved, it will be passed to graphic design at East Ayrshire Council to include logos and design as was the case for the first plan.

As the timescales for production of the second iteration of the plan were reduced, consultation has taken place to inform the plan based on local priorities while at the same time mirroring, where appropriate, the new BSL National Plan 2023 to 2029. We have also used a similar format for producing the plan.

Due to the tight timescales, it was agreed in collaboration with our local BSL users to develop a co-produced operational plan with sub actions to ensure delivery of the high level aims of the BSL local plan. The aim is to have this complete by Autumn 2024.

2.3.1 Quality/patient care

Promoting and facilitating the promotion of BSL as a language, will ensure provision of clear communication between service users and clinicians across NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

2.3.2 Workforce

It is expected that the work to drive forward the equalities agenda will be met from within existing staff resources. Continuing to improve the experience of BSL users will ensure staff are better able to provide safe and person-centred care to their patients, thus supporting improved staff experience.

2.3.3 Financial

It is expected that the work to drive forward the equalities agenda will be met from within existing resources.

2.3.4 Risk assessment/management

Failure to publish the Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan could result in NHS Ayrshire & Arran failing to meet their legislative requirements as outlined above which could result in the organisation being prosecuted for failure to comply with legislation.

2.3.5 Equality and diversity, including health inequalities

The production of the Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan is a legislative requirement, however, improving access to services for BSL users enables independence and reduces the inequalities faced due to communication barriers.

An impact assessment has not been completed because the proposed Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan highlights the strategic aims that the partners across Ayrshire will undertake to promote and facilitate the promotion of BSL as a language and to ensure clear communication is available for BSL users.

2.3.6 Other impacts

The outcome of this work should have a positive impact on local citizens, as well as staff, in line with the requirements of the BSL (Scotland) Act. This includes all the following areas of impact:

- Best value
- Effective Partnerships
- Governance and accountability
- Use of resources
- Performance management

The outcome of this work is compliant with the corporate objectives specifically:

- Delivering services that are clinically effective, safe, efficient and patient-centred;
- Promote and embed the Safe, Caring, and Respectful culture and support all staff to implement the necessary support mechanisms to ensure clear communication.

2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

The Board has carried out its duties to involve and engage external stakeholders where appropriate:

The partner organisations have taken steps to directly involve BSL users from across Ayrshire in the development of this plan. Face to face and virtual engagement took place with representatives from the Ayrshire Society for the Deaf, BSL students from Ayrshire College, the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service and representatives from Elderbank Primary School, Grange Academy and Greenwood Academy.

Face to face meetings

- Meeting with the Ayrshire Society for the Deaf, 17 January 2024, in collaboration with representatives from the British Deaf Association, at Ayrshire Society for the Deaf premises, Clark Street, Kilmarnock
- Meeting with BSL students from Ayrshire College, 1 February 2024 at the Riverside Building, Ayrshire College, Ayr Campus

2.3.8 Route to the meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

- Ayrshire Multi-Agency BSL Working Group, 20 February 2024
- Corporate Management Team, 27 February 2024

As this is a shared plan, it will also go through the relevant governance routes of all partners involved.

2.4 Recommendation

- **Decision**

Members are asked to agree and support the proposed aims contained within the Ayrshire Shared BSL local plan 2024-2030.

3. List of appendices

The following appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix 1, Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan 2024-2030

Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan 2024 - 2030

This shared local plan has been created with input from the following partners -



Contents:

1. Introduction
2. The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan
3. Rationale for Shared BSL Local Plan
4. Engagement and Consultation
5. Finalising our BSL Local Plan
6. Appendices

Appendix A: Partnership Approach to Shared BSL Local Plan

1. Introduction

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users* to live, work and visit. This means that people whose first or preferred language is BSL will be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens, and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives.

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years, showing how they will promote, and facilitate the promotion of the use and understanding BSL in Scotland. These plans will take account of local circumstances and consider how best to respond to BSL users' needs within local communities, organisations or services.

This is our second Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan developed in partnership with Ayrshire College; East, North and South Ayrshire Councils; East, North and South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

This BSL Local Plan sets out the priorities identified through consultation with BSL users living, working and studying in Ayrshire. The priorities included within this Plan cover:

- Delivering actions to support the implementation of the BSL National Plan
- BSL Accessibility
- Children, Young People and their Families
- Access to Employment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Celebrating BSL Culture
- BSL Data
- Democratic Participation

It describes the strategic aims the partners will take between 2024 and 2030 to enable BSL users to be involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens, and will be able to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives. The partners will develop a co-produced operational plan (Aim 2) to deliver on the strategic aims.

* 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.

2. Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan

This second Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan is reflective of the priorities contained within the Scottish Government's [National BSL Plan 2023-2029](#), which was published on 6 November 2023, but importantly the priorities for our local BSL users. We have carried forward a few of the actions from our previous plan as they were delayed due to the pandemic and remain priorities for our local BSL users.

The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan has been developed in partnership with our local BSL users throughout Ayrshire. This ensures that their concerns and issues have been listened to and are reflected in the aims we propose to take forward in the Plan.

The Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan has been designed by the partners (Appendix A) to have flexibility in the way that it is implemented, so that the Plan is able to adapt to changes in priorities and address any new issues that may arise in the six year period. Taking this

approach also allows the partners to build on the policies and practices already in place for the BSL community in our local area.

We will publish a progress report in 2027 as well as engage with our local BSL users to incorporate any additional aims identified through this process with a goal of delivering by 2030.

This partnership approach reduces consultation fatigue with our local BSL users and supports work that is cross cutting and will impact on all partners to ensure consistency and cohesiveness.

This partnership approach also provides the opportunity for shared understanding of the priorities of our local BSL users.

3. Rationale for Shared BSL Local Plan

In Ayrshire, there is already a strong partnership approach to working between the three Councils, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Ayrshire College and NHS Ayrshire & Arran. Therefore, it makes sense to build upon this strong partnership working to develop and deliver the aims to improve the lives of BSL users through a shared BSL Local Plan.

We acknowledge it is crucial to maintain ongoing collaboration with the BSL community in Ayrshire to understand the impact of our aims and to amend and update those aims ensuring it aligns with the needs of the BSL community.

A BSL Action Plan working group was established in September 2017 consisting of partner representatives and BSL service users. The group met a number of times to discuss the work to be taken forward. However, the work of this group was impacted by the Covid pandemic, and some of the members have changed roles and one of the BSL members moved out with the Ayrshire area.

Through the engagement and consultation work to develop this second plan, agreement has been reached that a new BSL Local Plan Implementation Advisory Group will be established (Aim 1). Although the working group was disbanded, it should be noted that regular engagement with the local BSL community has continued through attendance at meetings, text messaging and emails.

The new BSL Local Plan Implementation Advisory Group will have representation from the three Councils, three Health and Social Care Partnerships, Ayrshire College, NHS Ayrshire & Arran and representatives from our local BSL community. Having representation from our local BSL community is essential to drive forward the priorities outlined in this plan.

4. Engagement and Consultation

From the outset, representatives from the various partner organisations have taken steps to directly involve BSL users from across Ayrshire in the development of this plan. We have engaged with representatives from the Ayrshire Society for the Deaf, BSL students from Ayrshire College, the Ayrshire Deaf Education Service and representatives from Elderbank Primary School, Grange Academy and Greenwood Academy. Key themes were identified that we have reflected in this plan's aims.

This engagement with the BSL community was undertaken with appropriate BSL language

interpreters to ensure clear two-way dialogue to assist us in capturing their views in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way. However, given the tight timescales this engagement was limited to ensure delivery by 6 May 2024 but we will continue to work with BSL users and keep them up to date as the delivery of the plan progresses.

Ayrshire is unusual in that there are no voluntary sector organisations of and for, BSL users in the area, however, representation from the British Deaf Association (BDA) in Glasgow has been integral to taking this work forward.

Representatives from the various partner organisations also attended an event in Glasgow in November 2023 where the national plan and associated actions were discussed.

5. Finalising Our BSL Local Plan

The feedback from the aforementioned engagement and consultation works informed the final aims contained within our Plan. The aims proposed within this second BSL Local plan contain our continued commitment to support equal access, opportunity, representation, and inclusion for all BSL users.

We have taken consideration of the national BSL Plan and national policy context in the development of our Ayrshire Shared BSL Local Plan to ensure robust and effective aims are set for the next six years. To ensure the successful delivery of these strategic aims, the partners committed to the development of a co-produced operational plan (Aim 2) with representation from our local BSL community which will be published in Autumn 2024.

Delivering actions to support the implementation of the BSL National Plan.

We will deliver local actions to support the ambition of the BSL national plan. Our BSL Local Plan Implementation Advisory Group will provide feedback on our plan, ensuring the voices of those with lived experience are included.

Aim 1

Establish a BSL Local Plan Implementation Advisory Group with representation from the local BSL community.

Aim 2

By autumn 2024, develop an operational plan through the BSL Local Plan Implementation Advisory Group to deliver the strategic aims.

Aim 3

Follow guidance on inclusive communication from Scottish Government, when available, in line with the PSED review to ensure BSL users are considered in communications.

Aim 4

Based on the Scottish Government guidance on BSL access for public engagement, adopt inclusive public engagement guidance.

Aim 5

Publish a progress report on the actions in 2027, the midway point for this plan. As a living plan, this will enable us to reflect on what further actions are required to help us meet our longer-term goals and overall vision for BSL in Ayrshire.

BSL Accessibility

We will strive to remove accessibility as a barrier for BSL users, recognising the importance of having accessible information in the right format at the right time, utilising technology and increasing people's awareness of communication tools.

Aim 6

Develop a specific page on our public websites with information in BSL or signposting to relevant information available in BSL.

Aim 7

Continue to engage with BSL users and promote Contact Scotland BSL.

Aim 8

Promote and utilise the Scottish Government Signport Portal for BSL/English interpreters.

Children, Young People and their Families

We will work to ensure deaf or deafblind children and their family are offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL. We will strengthen partnerships between relevant organisations to overcome barriers for BSL users and deaf / deafblind children to ensure they have the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential.

Aim 9

Facilitate BSL users, deaf and deafblind children and their families to access support.

Aim 10

Continue to promote BSL service provision to ensure staff understand the importance of BSL provision.

Aim 11

Support NHS teams and BSL providers to develop robust referral pathways which will result in BSL users, deaf and deafblind children accessing both the healthcare and language learning support they require.

Aim 12

Promote access to the Scottish Government opportunities for targeted workers to learn BSL up to an appropriate SCQF Level.

Aim 13

Signpost BSL users and their families to access the Scottish Government opportunities to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL, as well as hold local events.

Access to Employment

We will work towards ensuring BSL users receive the correct support and information to develop their skills, consider what route to employment is right for them and enter into the workforce so that they can fulfil their potential.

Aim 14

Promote and support implementation of the nationally identified solutions to specific barriers for BSL users to support an easy transition from school to a positive destination.

Aim 15

Through No One Left Behind, deliver place-based employability services that support individuals to overcome structural barriers to entering and sustaining employment. We will work with the Implementation Advisory Group for this plan to identify solutions to specific barriers for BSL users accessing devolved employability support.

Health and Wellbeing

We are committed to ensuring BSL users 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.

Aim 16

Promote opportunities for engagement and embed actions related to BSL users, based on the work set out within the social isolation and loneliness strategy.

Aim 17

Promote access to support services during the cancer journey.

Aim 18

Support BSL users to understand the use of the remote video BSL interpreting service.

Celebrating BSL Culture

We are committed to assisting BSL users to have access to cultural activities in Ayrshire, and equal opportunities to enjoy and contribute to sharing the importance of BSL and D/deaf culture with the people of Ayrshire.

Aim 19

Work to help embed BSL further within culture and the arts including increasing availability of signed events and performances.

BSL Data

We will work to better understand our local BSL community in Ayrshire to help inform decision making in our policies and practices.

Aim 20

Utilise the data from the Census and any other sources to better understand our local BSL population, as well as explore issues such as accessibility and access to services.

Democratic Participation

We will strive to support BSL users to be fully involved in democratic and public life in Ayrshire, as active and informed citizens, and as voters in local and general elections.

Aim 21

Publicise resources from the Electoral Commission, once available, to provide ongoing support for BSL users' participation in democratic life.

Aim 22

Ensure relevant electoral staff are aware of the need to provide appropriate information on voting processes to BSL users.

Partnership Approach to Shared BSL Local Plan

Below is some information on the partners involved in the shared BSL local plan.

Ayrshire College

Ayrshire College is a large regional college which operates from three main campuses in Ayr, Kilmarnock and Kilwinning. The College provides education, skills development, and training for learners across Ayrshire and beyond and has approximately 11,000 learners enrolling in college programmes every year.

The College delivers programmes at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 1 to 8, including a range of Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships and bespoke delivery for businesses.

Ayrshire College currently provides extended learning support (ELS) for students with additional support needs, including students who are BSL users. This includes arranging BSL support to enable students to fully participate in all aspects of their College experience.

The College has a number of Communication Support Workers who provide BSL support and a number of permanent staff members who are proficient signers.

East Ayrshire Council

East Ayrshire Council serves just over 122,000 people living in diverse communities in both urban and rural settings. The majority of people live in mainly rural settings across some 30 small communities set against a background of some of Scotland's most spectacular scenery.

Internal and External support to BSL users is provided to access Council services, attending meetings, forums, and events as required. Internal support is provided via our Sensory Impairment Team, and we are one of a few local authorities who employ a BSL interpreter who provides support, guidance, BSL and Deaf Awareness Training to staff.

Grange Academy has three Teachers of the Deaf, one of whom is a Principal Teacher who line manages the deaf base. There are currently five pupils who are supported.

East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership combined the services of NHS Ayrshire & Arran and East Ayrshire Council to develop and deliver services that are more personalised and meet the needs and aspirations of our residents. Specifically, our focus is on ensuring that children and young people get the best start in life, that people live healthier, longer lives and are supported to be independent and included and have choice and control - no matter who they are or where they live.

East Ayrshire Council Sensory Impairment Team provide services for people with a visual, hearing or dual sensory impairment and includes British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation. They provide information, telephone support, assessment and equipment provision.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran

NHS Ayrshire & Arran want the best for our local people and our staff. We pride ourselves on improving health and providing a comprehensive range of high quality, safe, effective and person-centred health services. Our strategic direction is based on continuous improvement and services that are centred on the patient or service user. Our purpose is 'Working together to achieve the healthiest life possible for everyone in Ayrshire and Arran'.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran provides BSL interpretation to anyone who requires this support when accessing health care. This support is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week when accessing our hospitals, community based services, family doctor (GP), dentist and opticians. Due to the need to be pre-booked we are aware that pharmacy is more challenging and we will look to ways to improve this in the future.

North Ayrshire Council

North Ayrshire Council serves a population of 134,220 residents, the council area includes the mainland, Isle of Arran and Isles of Cumbrae. Our Council's vision is 'A North Ayrshire that is fair for all' and our mission is 'Working together to improve the lives of our people in North Ayrshire'.

External interpretation services are used to support BSL users in their interaction with Council services during formal meetings and proceedings. Sensory Awareness training (including BSL awareness) is available for employees, alongside a Deaf awareness e-learning programme. Support is provided to Council services from the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), who provide advice and guidance to employees. Council and HSCP employees can make direct referrals for communication support via the duty system, a dedicated email address or CareFirst.

Elderbank Primary School contains the Pan Ayrshire Hearing Impairment Service for primary aged pupils.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership was established to manage and monitor the joining together of community health and social care services. Through partnership working our vision is that: 'All people who live in North Ayrshire are able to have a safe, healthy and active life'.

All of our work fits within five strategic priorities. The aim of these priorities is to work together with local people to tackle the significant social and health inequalities that exist in North Ayrshire. We will meet our priorities by making changes to the Health and Care services we deliver. In doing this we will support local people to live safely at home, or in a homely setting, as close to family, friends and the local community as possible.

The Sensory Impairment Team has a dedicated 'smart phone' and clients contact the service to request assistance Monday to Friday. A duty system is in place on a Tuesday and Thursday every week where clients can come into the office without an appointment for help and communication support. There are two employees within the team who are very proficient signers. The team works across the local authority providing BSL support to clients who are accessing services and on occasion outside agencies.

South Ayrshire Council

South Ayrshire stands out in Scotland as an area of outstanding natural beauty, with its coastal and rural communities, and a long record of innovation and ambition. We are an area rich in heritage, with strong historical connections, fantastic community spirit, welcoming people, a thriving voluntary sector, beautiful scenery, and strong ambitions for an economic and sustainable future where people choose South Ayrshire as a place to live, visit and invest in.

We have a population of 112,450 and by 2043 is projected to increase considerably. Our purpose is to serve South Ayrshire, our vision is to make a difference every day and our values are to be respectful, positive, supportive, proud and ambitious. We have 3 priorities for 2023-2028:

- Space and Places
- Live, Work, Learn
- Civic and Community Pride.

Teachers of the Deaf provide Deaf awareness training and introductory BSL training for families and stakeholders. As part of our internal e-learning programme, BSL Awareness and Deaf Awareness modules are available, the courses can be accessed by staff members. Our Sensory Impairment team provide Sensory Loss awareness sessions on a regular basis to staff as well as on an ad hoc basis to internal and external organisations. External interpretation services are used to support BSL users and their interaction with Council services as required, including formal meetings and proceedings.

South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership brings together a wide range of health and social work services in to a single operational delivery unit. The Partnership's Integration Joint Board is responsible for planning and overseeing the delivery of a full range of community health and social work/social care services, including those for older people, adults, children and families and people in the Criminal Justice system in South Ayrshire. It is also responsible for a number of Pan-Ayrshire health services relating to Allied Health Professionals, Continence, Joint Equipment and Technology Enabled Care.