



Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024



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SECTION 1

1.1 Introduction

This is the British Sign Language (BSL) plan for the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (the Commissioner), produced in compliance with sections 2 and 3 of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

This plan sets out the actions which the Commissioner will take over the period 2018-2024 to improve access for BSL users to the range of statutory functions that the Commissioner fulfils.

The Commissioner can investigate complaints about the conduct of:

- MSPs
- Councillors
- Public body board members

to assess whether they have complied with the relevant code of conduct. If the Commissioner considers that the rules in the code of conduct have been breached, the Commissioner will refer the matter to the Standards Commission for Scotland (councillors and board members) or to the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). The Standards Commission and the Parliament have the power to impose sanctions, if the Commissioner's findings are accepted.

The Commissioner regulates ministerial appointments to the boards of public bodies to see whether these are made on the basis of:

- Merit
- Integrity
- Diversity and equality

and to assess whether the Scottish Ministers have complied with the code of practice. If ministers have breached the rules in the code of practice, and the consequences of the breach are significant, the Commissioner will report the matter to the Scottish Parliament.

To the extent that the Commissioner's functions are exercisable using BSL, his plan follows the BSL National Plan, published on 24 October 2017, which was developed by the Scottish Government following extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

The BSL plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the National Plan, where these are relevant to the work of the Commissioner.

Like the National Plan, the Commissioner's BSL plan starts from the principled position that BSL is a language in its own right and that BSL users, like all other citizens of Scotland, have the right to engage with and access information about the work of the Commissioner when they so choose, without unnecessary barriers, including language barriers. It recognises that many BSL users neither use nor understand English and that, for some, written or spoken English is not a first or even second language.

The Commissioner is committed to protecting and supporting BSL, including in its tactile form.

The Commissioner's BSL plan was developed with input from the Scottish Parliament and other parliamentary officeholders. The Scottish Parliament's assistance was based in turn on the guidance of an expert adviser, Professor Graham Turner from the Languages & Intercultural Studies Department at Heriot-Watt University, and from members of an external BSL reference group. The Commissioner also consulted with the Scottish Parliament's BSL project team and other parliamentary officeholders to ensure consistency of approach to BSL planning and to facilitate the sharing of resources in the provision of services and materials to the BSL user communities. In addition, a two-day engagement event was held at the Parliament in May 2018, involving Parliament staff, the Commissioner and the other officeholders. The event attracted many attendees from across the BSL user communities.

The Commissioner's draft plan was published for consultation from 9 August to 14 September with a BSL version made available on Facebook and on YouTube.

The Commissioner is grateful for the advice and views that he has received in the development of this plan.

The Commissioner is committed to continued engagement around implementing actions and providing feedback on progress. The Commissioner sees his plan as a 'living document' and, as such, it will be revised and reissued as necessary. The Commissioner will contribute to the national progress review (interim report) on the National BSL Plan scheduled for 2020. To take account of the outcomes of this review, the Commissioner has included a review period in 2021.

1.2 Lead officer for the plan

The Commissioner welcomes comments on the plan at any time. Ian Bruce is the lead officer for this plan and can be contacted with any questions, comments, ideas or suggestions. Anyone wishing to contact Ian can do so by using the Contact BSL Scotland service, by email, regular post or by telephone. Contact details are set out in section 4.2 of this document "How to send your comments".

1.3 Where to find the BSL version of this plan

Links to the BSL version of the plan will be made available on the Commissioner's website and on LinkedIn. The BSL version will be published on YouTube, and Facebook.

www.ethicalstandards.org.uk

SECTION 2

Short summary of the plan

The BSL plan contains actions aimed at improving the way the Commissioner engages with BSL users in the D/deaf and D/deafblind communities. In summary, these actions will require the Commissioner to:

- Make information about the role that the Commissioner fulfils accessible to BSL users, including producing relevant materials in BSL;
- Improve the online experience of BSL users by providing relevant information through improved website accessibility;
- Improve access for BSL users to the functions that the Commissioner fulfils, including BSL interpretation of forms and guidance for people who wish to complain about the conduct of their councillor, board members or MSPs, or who wish to complain about a public appointment;
- Work with the Scottish Government and others to develop and promote information and guidance to help BSL users to increase their participation in public life and, in particular, their access to public appointments.

SECTION 3

Detailed Actions in the BSL plan

3.1 Across all functions

The Commissioner shares 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".

The Commissioner fulfils statutory functions but does not provide public services. The Commissioner's plan reflects the way in which BSL users will be able to access those functions in line with all other citizens.

THE COMMISSIONER'S ACTIONS

By 2023, the Commissioner will:

- Develop and adopt good practice guidelines to help improve accessibility for BSL users to information about and the functions of the Commissioner. The guidelines will be improved over time by taking into account the views of BSL users;
- Make information about the role that the Commissioner fulfils more accessible to BSL users, including producing relevant new materials in BSL;
- Improve the online experience of BSL users through improved website accessibility;
- Improve access for BSL users to the functions that the Commissioner fulfils, including making available online BSL interpretations of forms and guidance for people who wish to access those functions;
- Ensure that the complaints handling process in relation to Councillors, Members of devolved public bodies and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) who are alleged to have contravened their Code of Conduct is accessible to BSL users;
- Enable BSL users to escalate complaints about public appointments to the Commissioner by ensuring that the complaints-handling process is accessible to BSL users;
- Work with the Scottish Government and others to develop and promote information and guidance to help BSL users to increase their participation in public life;
- Promote 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 and third sector services and for these services to contact them;

- Train staff to use and promote the use of such online interpreting video relay services (which allow BSL users to contact public and third sector services and for these services to contact them), and explore the potential for their greater use;
- Signpost all staff to appropriate BSL awareness training, and enable them to take up such training;
- Ensure promotion of employment opportunities to D/deaf, Deaf/blind and hard of hearing people.

3.2 Democracy

The Commissioner shares the long-term goal for democracy set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

"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"

By 2023, the Commissioner will:

- Work with the Scottish Government by supporting, encouraging and aiding it to promote public appointments as a way of participating in public life by producing information about public appointments in BSL and promoting public appointments specifically to BSL users;
- Work with other organisations to promote guidance about board appointments to BSL users;
- Recommend that the Scottish Government's guidance about board appointments and materials used to encourage and facilitate applications include specific reference to BSL users and be made available in BSL on request.

SECTION 4

4.1 What if I want to comment on the plan?

Anyone with questions, comments or ideas about the plan is welcome to contact the Commissioner to share these at any time.

4.2 How to send your comments

Please contact the Commissioner using the following details:



If you would like to give the Commissioner your views using British Sign Language please do so by visiting the contactScotland-BSL website:

<https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

contactScotland-BSL offer a free interpreting service via PC, lap-top, tablet or smartphone.

If you want to provide views in writing you can do so using the Commissioner's postal address or email address:

Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HE
i.bruce@ethicalstandards.org.uk

You can also submit views by telephone:

Tel: 0131 347 3890

Tel: 0300 011 0550

Calls to our 0300 number costs no more than a national rate call to an 01 or 02 number.

4.3 What the Commissioner will do with your information

The Commissioner will use the information that you provide to help to further develop and refine his BSL plan over time. He will also use your contact details to keep you informed about changes made to the plan but only if you tell him that you want him to do this. He will store your response securely until he has published his next BSL plan, then delete it.

If you contact the Commissioner using contactScotland - BSL with your views, he will:

- transcribe what you say into English
- store your name securely until the BSL plan has been published, then delete it
- store the transcription until he has published his next BSL plan, then delete it.

If you want to know more about how the Commissioner will handle your information, please contact Ian Bruce.