



# **British Sign Language Plan 2023-2029**

## Section 1: Table of Contents

Section 1: Table of Contents .....	2
Section 2: .....	3
Introduction.....	3
About West Lothian College .....	3
Name and Contact Details of Lead Officer .....	4
Consultation on the West Lothian College Local BSL Plan 2023-29.....	4
How to comment on this plan.....	5
Section 3: .....	6
Executive Summary .....	6
Section 4: .....	7
West Lothian College BSL Plan 2023-26 .....	7
BSL Accessibility.....	7
Children, Young People and Their Families .....	9
Access to Employment.....	10
Health and Wellbeing .....	11
Celebrating BSL Culture.....	12
BSL Data .....	13
Transport.....	14
Access to Justice .....	14
Democratic Participation.....	14
Section 5 .....	16
Monitoring and Review .....	16
Appendices.....	17
Appendix 1 – Annual Update on BSL Local Plan 2023-24 .....	17

## Section 2:

### Introduction

On 6 November 2023, the Scottish Government published the revised British Sign Language (BSL): National Plan 2023 to 2029 which sets out the Government's vision for making a difference to the lives of D/Deaf\* and Deafblind BSL users across Scotland in this six year period. The plan requires all listed authorities to publish their own local plan on 6 May 2024. This document fulfils this requirement.

As with the first six year plan following the adoption of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015, the Scottish Government has clearly stated its vision "to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL Users to live, work and visit".

West Lothian College supports this vision and sets out our own vision, goals and actions through this West Lothian College local BSL Plan. The plan sets out the actions we plan to take in the period 2023-2029, with a progress report to be published in 2026.

The Scottish Government BSL National Plan was developed through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them. This local plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan, interpreting these to ensure they relate to the work of the college. We are confident that this plan will make a difference to the lives of D/Deaf and Deafblind BSL users accessing services at West Lothian College.

Throughout the plan, we refer to **BSL users**. This covers all people whose first or preferred language is BSL, including those who receive the language in a tactile form.

The college recognises that BSL is a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary. It has its own dialects and rich variation. It is a language which enables many of our D/Deaf and Deafblind citizens to learn, work, and live life to the full, and to make their contribution to our communities, our culture and our economy.

\*D/Deaf is the preferred term used by many people in the deaf community who are more likely to be BSL users than those of us who lose our hearing over time and are more likely to learn lip-reading as a backup.

### About West Lothian College

West Lothian College is an award winning provider of further and higher education based in Livingston, West Lothian. The college offers a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications in the area, offering a diverse curriculum to approximately 8000 learners.

West Lothian College operates out of its main campus in Livingston as well as delivering qualifications throughout Scotland, particularly through our Children's

Hearing Scotland Learning Academy and a range of work-based qualifications. With a vibrant, modern and innovative learning environment, the college is well equipped to ensure that students have the best facilities and resources to help develop their learning and skills.

We commit to supporting BSL users who may be students, staff or visitors to the campus or engage with learning across Scotland.

We know from the last census statistics in 2011 that there were **463 people** living in West Lothian using BSL at home, and 124 of those were under 18. There is no longer a dedicated school for deaf children in West Lothian, but such schools are still located in Falkirk and Hamilton. Many children who use BSL are now being educated in mainstream education settings.

West Lothian College is an inclusive organisation and all policies, procedures, strategies, plans, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services are assessed to consider the impact on staff and students covered by the Equalities Act 2010 by the completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). Protected characteristics are defined as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership (in employment only), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. From 2023, we also apply The Human Rights Act 1998 to review the impact of our work on these fundamental rights and freedoms.

### **Name and Contact Details of Lead Officer**

Beth Brownlee  
Head of Student Experience and Improvement  
West Lothian College  
Almondvale Crescent  
Livingston  
EH54 7EP  
[bbrownlee@west-lothian.ac.uk](mailto:bbrownlee@west-lothian.ac.uk)  
Telephone: 01506 418181

### **Consultation on the West Lothian College Local BSL Plan 2023-29**

The college consults regularly with our communities on all aspects of our equality and diversity work and we continuously engage in events to raised awareness among staff and students of the implications of membership of any protected characteristics as well as intersectional effects of belonging to more than one group.

The college has collaborated with our own BSL Action Planning group, college managers, West Lothian Council, Skills Development Scotland, Deaf Action and Edinburgh Napier University to gather feedback to help understand our progress and further shape our planning.

West Lothian College continues to engage with students who are BSL users to gather feedback and improve access to our services. We work closely with our Student Association and use feedback from Elected Officers and Class

Ambassadors to support achievement of the action plan, as well as wider feedback received through college wide surveys.

The West Lothian College local BSL Plan has been published in BSL and English for consultation. Both versions of the plan will be available shortly.

### **How to comment on this plan**

The college always welcomes feedback on our plan which you can give by:

Viewing the video on YouTube at [www.youtube.co.uk](http://www.youtube.co.uk) and then sending your comments to [bslviews@west-lothian.ac.uk](mailto:bslviews@west-lothian.ac.uk) or by contacting us through contactSCOTLAND-BSL or commenting in English by email to [bslviews@west-lothian.ac.uk](mailto:bslviews@west-lothian.ac.uk)

Please contact the Lead Officer if you wish to be involved in developing our future actions. Contact details are listed above.

## **Section 3:**

### **Executive Summary**

West Lothian College has a strong reputation for partnership working across our communities and we will seek to use existing, and new, partnerships to realise the long-term goals set out in the Scottish Government British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan: 2023 to 2029.

The College Local BSL Plan shares the goals for all listed authorities (Scottish public sector services) set out in the Scottish Government British Sign Language (BSL): National Plan 2023 to 2029 and in particular will:

- Seek to enable BSL users to have a full experience of college, like every other applicant, colleague, student or visitor.
- Widely promote the use of contactSCOTLAND-BSL to applicants, staff, students and other users of college services.
- Work with BSL and other stakeholders to develop information and resources that are beneficial and accessible to BSL users.
- Raise staff awareness, knowledge and understanding of BSL user needs through partnership working with Deaf Action and others.
- Work in partnership with the Student Association to ensure BSL users can participate in the wider life and work of the college.

## **Section 4:**

### **West Lothian College BSL Plan 2023-26**

We follow the nine point National plan in developing actions against the following priority areas:

- BSL Accessibility
- Children, Young People and Their Families
- Access to Employment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Celebrating BSL Culture
- BSL Data
- Transport
- Access to Justice
- Democratic Participation

#### **BSL Accessibility**

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

“To remove accessibility as a barrier for BSL users in all aspects of life, 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.”

Through the actions of our 2017-2023 plan which prioritised access across all our services, we have already embedded services for BSL users at college:

- Induction loop at Information Point and Learning Centre.
- BSL awareness training was conducted for frontline staff including lecturers of BSL Users and students on the same course.
- We guarantee an interview for all BSL using staff and student applicants subject to them meeting minimum requirements for a job or course and will support any needs to help them achieve this successfully.
- The HR recruitment process has been developed to facilitate and enable applications from BSL users.
- Staff interview invites have been updated to include info. re reasonable adjustments and makes specific mention of BSL.
- Provide support throughout the student journey for students who use BSL, including completing application & enrolment forms, interviews and applying for Disabled Students Allowance
- Our Estates and Sustainability team have conducted a campus audit to ensure that BSL Users have full accessibility to services, which is the case as long as they can read English.

### Further Actions – BSL Accessibility

Action point	Deadline	Lead area	Update March 2024
Ensure accessibility of information via the college Website for BSL users	Dec 2024	Marketing	Fresh website audit to be carried out and contactSCOTLAND details to be placed wherever “contact us” is mentioned and other key points.
Students for whom English isn't a first language currently require to achieve the equivalent of ESOL Level 5 for progression to mainstream courses. We will establish what is the fair equivalent for applicants whose only language is BSL.	June 2024	Student Experience	New action
Add contactSCOTLAND details to all college staff e-mail signatures.	June 2025	Student Experience	New action
Implement an annual programme of BSL Awareness training for front line college staff including lecturers who teach any D/Deaf students and the students in their classes as well as Student Association officers.	June 2025	Learning and Development	New action
Introduce written BSL User Staff guidance for supporting staff, students and visitors to college as well as staff interviewing BSL users as potential staff and students	July 2025	HR&PD	New action
Create a group of staff BSL “Champions”	July 2025	HR&PD	New action
As BSL user staff/student applicants are	Review annually in June	Quality/ Information Systems	This will be addressed as we attract staff and students who



appointed/offered a job/place, we will review quality processes to ensure learning and teaching and assessment practices, including examinations and graduation, are inclusive of BSL users and provide equal opportunities for BSL users to succeed.			use BSL responding to individual needs.
Continue to support BSL using staff to access what they need via the UK government's "Access To Work" funding.	Review annually in July	HR and PD	New Action  This is addressed as we attract staff who use BSL responding to individual needs.
Investigate offering BSL interpretation at Graduation and other significant college calendar events	Oct 2024	Marketing	New Action
Engage with new Inclusive Communication regulations as these come into force	Dec 2025	Head of Student Experience	New Action
Refresh the audit of the campus to ensure BSL Users have full accessibility	Jun 2024	Head of Estates and Sustainability	New Action

## Children, Young People and Their Families

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

*“The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a deaf or deafblind child and their family 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.”*

Through the actions of our 2017-2023 plan which targeted Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare, Schools Education and Post-School Education, we have already embedded BSL services for children, young people and their families:

- We offer two British Sign Language (BSL) courses, Level 3: An Introductory and Level 4: BSL which are highly successful and run twice a year, August to December, then January to June, meaning that students can achieve both levels without delay. This has included family learning.
- We aid students who use BSL to help them complete bursary and SAAS application forms.

### Further Actions on Children, Young People and Their Families

Action point	Deadline	Lead area	Update March 2024
Provide accessible information for schools about what BSL users can expect from the college	Dec 2024	Marketing/Schools	Video on website
Ensure full access to open days for prospective students who use BSL	Dec 2024	Marketing/ Schools	Website or promotional materials
Establish effective partnerships with schools, universities and other relevant partners to ensure smooth transitions for BSL users from school to college to University	June 2020	Schools/ Student Support	Ongoing and when required
Ensure BSL users can access key information about funding, support and childcare when they are students	Aug 2024	Marketing/Finance/ Support for Learning	Video on website
Explore with the local authority how we can expand BSL training course offering to improve access to training for parents and young people	Dec 2024	Access, Employability and Schools Faculty	Identify need for succession planning and offer Level 5
Engagement activities with schools to be developed to be inclusive for BSL users	June 2024	Schools Liaison	Need to think about how we do this? Reaching out to forums?

### Access to Employment

We share the long-term goal for access to employment set out in the BSL National Plan, which is:

*“BSL users will receive person-centred support 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, and improve Scotland’s economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career.”*

Through the actions of our 2017-2023 plan, we have already embedded BSL services for Access to Employment, which was previously entitled Training, Work and Social Security through:

- Achievement of the Disability Confident Leader award demonstrating our commitment to support for disabled applicants and staff
- Improvements to our own college staff recruitment and selection processes
- BSL User support clearly available to staff and student applicants on request

### **Further Actions on Access to Employment**

<b>Action point</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Lead area</b>	<b>Update March 24</b>
Raise awareness of the UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ scheme for students who use BSL so that they can benefit from the support it provides when they enter the world of work	June 2024	Marketing	Ensuring that BSL users who are leaving college are equipped with this info ...how will we do this.
Ensure BSL users can access Skills Development Scotland (SDS) services and other information relating to moving on from college into the workplace, careers, volunteering and university, particularly highlighting the SDS BSL signed services on MyWorldOfWork.	June 2024	Marketing	As above
Renew our focus on supporting work placement for any students who are BSL Users	June 2025	Employer Engagement Officer	New Action

### **Health and Wellbeing**

We share the long-term goal for health, mental health and wellbeing 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”*

Through the actions of our 2017-2023 plan, we have already embedded BSL services for Health and Wellbeing, which was then entitled Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing as follows:

- Ensuring BSL users have full access to health, mental health and wellbeing services
- Developed Student Support to ensure student BSL users have full access to guidance and counselling services while in college
- Work with the Student Association and Curriculum faculties to ensure BSL users have full access to wider college facilities and services

### Further Actions on Health and Wellbeing

Action point	Deadline	Lead area	Update March 2024
Develop the Student Association web page to be accessible for BSL users	June 2024	Marketing/ SA	Create a BSL video for the SA page

### Celebrating BSL Culture

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

*“BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, and equal opportunities to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and deaf culture with the people of Scotland.”*

Through the actions of our 2017-23 plan, which focused on Culture and the Arts, we have already:

- worked to ensure that all Student Association groups and societies are inclusive for BSL users.

### Further Actions on Celebrating BSL Culture

Action point	Deadline	Lead area	Update March 2024
We offer two highly successful BSL courses, taught by a D/Deaf teacher. There is demand for an SCQF Level 5 course, but our current lecturer is at their delivery capacity. We need to investigate	April 2026	Access, Employability and Schools Faculty	New Action

the feasibility of offering a Level 5 course.			
A recent report on the Impact of the British Sign Language (BSL) Act 2015 on Deaf Education report recommended all college regions offer an SCQF Level 6 BSL course. We acknowledge this recommendation and will monitor demand to investigate how this might be supported in future, working with West Lothian Council.	April 2026	Access, Employability and Schools Faculty	New Action

## BSL Data

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

*“To strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community in Scotland to better inform decision making in public policy and service design.”*

This was a new area for action in the 2023-29 plan. At present, we do ask all students and staff to disclose any disabilities as part of the application and enrolment process (this information is kept separate from selection panels). However, for both staff and students, we don't ask if they are BSL users, only if they will disclose that they have Deafness or partial hearing loss (this is the Scottish Funding Council wording we are required to use).

## Actions on BSL Data

Action point	Deadline	Lead area	Update March 2024
Analyse existing data we have about students and prospective students who use BSL in our college and identify and fill information gaps so that we can measure our progress	July 2025	Information Systems	Annual key performance indicators produced and listed in Appendix 1.
Analyse existing data we have about staff and applicants to identify and fill information gaps so we can establish baselines and measure our progress.	July 2025	HR & PD/Information Systems	New Action

Investigate whether we can ask staff and student applicants if they are BSL Users to establish more precise support needs	July 2025	HR & PD/Information Systems	New Action
---	-----------	-----------------------------	------------

## Transport

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

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

Although Transport was a priority area in our 2017-23 plan, we have not yet achieved our action in this area, so it remains in this plan.

### Actions on Transport

Action point	Deadline	Lead area	Update March 2024
Develop website and Student Handbook information to ensure information on public transport links are accessible and well-publicised for BSL users	June 2024	Marketing	New action

## Access to Justice

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

*“BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland.”*

This is a new priority area in the 2023-29 National Plan, however, we are well placed to support this through our Trust project, which aims to support people into education who face additional barriers, including involvement in the justice system.

### Further Actions on Access to Justice

Action point	Deadline	Lead area	Update March 2024
Staff on The Trust have had BSL Awareness training	July 2025	Learning and Development	New Action

## Democratic Participation

We share 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*

Through the actions of our 2017-23 plan, which focused on Democracy, we had already committed to supporting the Student Association to develop the skills to enable student BSL users to participate in democratic processes at college.

### **Further Actions on Democratic Participation**

<b>Action point</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Lead area</b>	<b>Update March 2024</b>
Provide training and development for Trade Union Representatives to enable effective support for members who are BSL users	June 2025	Learning and Development	The training planned for 24-25 is also appropriate for use by Trade Union Representatives.
Ensure student BSL users can access information about Student Association democratic processes such as elections.	June 2024	Student Association Development Officer and Student Support Team	New Action

## **Section 5**

### **Monitoring and Review**

West Lothian College will monitor progress on the BSL Plan through the BSL Action Group and Mainstreaming Equalities Committee. The BSL Action Group meet monthly and the Mainstreaming Equalities Committee meets quarterly and reports on progress to the Board of Governors via the Learning and Teaching Committee.

Progress on our BSL Action Plan will be formally reported on annually by providing an update on the actions to the Mainstreaming Equality Committee.

In 2026, we will refresh the plan in response to any national plan progress reports.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Annual Update on BSL Local Plan 2022-23

#### Support BSL Using Staff

During Academic Year, 2022-23, we were able to embed BSL/English interpretation support for our Deaf employee, to ensure they are fully able to participate in college conference events. This was achieved via funding from the Access to Work programme.

Reporting on staff data is not disaggregated to named disabilities, but we report on the percentage of disabilities and any disability pay gap in our biannual update on the Mainstreaming Report which was last published in April 2023: [equality-mainstreaming-report-final-final.pdf \(west-lothian.ac.uk\)](https://www.west-lothian.ac.uk/equality-mainstreaming-report-final-final.pdf).

#### Supporting BSL Using Students

During academic year 2022-23, the latest year for which confirmed comparative data is available at the time of writing, students who reported as having “Deafness or partial hearing loss” were very successful:

<b>Key Performance Indicator – Students</b>	<b>Number</b>
Applicants in 22-23	16
Enrolments in 22-23	5
Withdrawals in 22-23	0
Student partial success (stay to end of course, but achieve <70% of units)	0
Student completed success	5

This 100% rate of success exceeds our already our higher than sector average complete success rate for disabled students, which at 79.7% is already very good compared to 61.6% (21-22 data most recent available at time of writing).