

British Sign Language

UWS BSL Plan
2024 - 2030



Introduction

We are delighted to present the updated British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for University of the West of Scotland (UWS), as part of our ongoing commitment to inclusivity and accessibility and in line with our obligations under the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

This revised BSL Plan builds upon the achievements of and learning from the first UWS BSL Plan which ran from October 2018 to May 2024. Key progress since the introduction of the BSL plan in 2018 includes:

- A BSL Working Group was set up overseeing the UWS BSL Plan.
- The creation and roll out of a BSL entry level course via the School of Education & Social Sciences and Social Sciences.
- The inclusion of 'BSL users' within the UWS Equality Impact Assessment template ensuring the continual consideration of the needs of BSL users.
- Development of a guide on how to book BSL interpreters.
- Engaging with the Further and Higher Education sector on local BSL Plans to identify collaborative working.
- Gathering staff and student data on the number of BSL users.
- Including contact Scotland relay service details on key UWS webpages.

A full overview of the actions progressed within our previous BSL Plan can be found in **[Appendix 1](#)**.

This revised plan draws inspiration from the recently published Scottish Government BSL National Plan. As with our first plan, the priority areas outlined in the national plan serve as a framework for structuring the UWS BSL Plan. This ensures that our initiatives are not only aligned with the broader national vision but also reflective of the unique needs and dynamics of our university community.



Consultation and Collaboration

UWS remains dedicated to consulting and collaborating with those directly impacted by the BSL plan. We value the insights and perspectives of the D/deaf and D/deafblind communities and those who are BSL users due to a learning difficulty, ensuring that our initiatives are not only effective but also responsive to evolving needs.

During the creation of this plan several consultation and collaboration opportunities were created to ensure that our updated plan addresses the needs of BSL users. Consultation and collaboration included:

- Initial feedback from the UWS BSL Working Group on the draft plan.
- A joint consultation event with West College Scotland to gather feedback from students who are BSL users.
- Consultation with the Diversity and Equality Alliance in Renfrewshire from several external local partners and Renfrewshire Council.
- Attendance at the Edinburgh Napier open BSL Plan Meeting.
- Regular engagement with the Scottish Further and Higher Education BSL Group which included inputs from members on BSL Plans and BSL interpreting.



National BSL Plan Priority Areas

This plan will raise the profile of BSL at UWS and ensure that BSL users have good access to the University. While it is divided into sections related to long term goals for Scotland, it shows how these will work in an educational context. Within the National BSL Plan there are ten priority areas:

1. Delivering the BSL National Plan 2023-2029
2. BSL Accessibility
3. Children, Young People, and their Families
4. Access to Employment
5. Health and Wellbeing
6. Celebrating BSL Culture
7. BSL Data
8. Transport
9. Access to Justice
10. Democratic Participation

UWS has aligned actions of our new BSL Plan to the following relevant National priority areas:

- Priority 2: BSL Accessibility
- Priority 3: Children, Young People, and their Families
- Priority 4: Access to Employment
- Priority 5: Health and Wellbeing
- Priority 7: BSL Data

The actions under each of the priority areas are outlined below. Throughout the action plan it is indicated where an action is new and where we will continue to further develop incomplete actions laid out in our 2018 BSL Plan.

Where actions have been marked as complete and ongoing in **Appendix 1: UWS BSL Action Plan 2018 – 2024** these actions will continue to be progressed as business as usual. Therefore, these actions are not included in the action plan outlined in the updated BSL Plan 2024 – 2030.



UWS BSL Plan 2024 – 2030

UWS shares, and will actively contribute towards, the goal for better BSL Accessibility as highlighted in the National Plan:

“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.”

To contribute to this National Plan priority area (table 1) UWS will:

National Plan priority area 1 – table 1	
Action	Timescale
Provide BSL awareness training for key members of staff which includes information on BSL and communication approaches with those who are D/deaf.	Implemented by 2025.
Enhance messaging in all promotional and marketing materials to inform students that BSL interpreting can be provided during studies and at graduation.	Implemented by 2026.
Work cross institutionally by engaging in local and national meetings surrounding BSL plans.	Implemented by end 2024.
Review the viability of BSL interpreting at all UWS graduation ceremonies.	Review completed by 2025.

UWS will continue the following actions laid out in our 2018 BSL Plan (table 2):

2018 BSL Plan – table 2	
Action	Timescale
Improve access to our information and services for BSL users, including making our website more accessible to BSL users by including BSL videos and highlighting BSL accessible ways to get in touch.	Videos in place by 2027.
Provide access to open days for prospective students who use BSL and monitor impact to inform our practice.	Access to open days for prospective students who use BSL in place. Monitoring mechanism for the uptake of BSL interpreters in place by June 2025 to inform future practice.

National Priority Area 3: Children, Young People, and their Families

UWS shares, and will actively contribute towards, the goal to ensure children and young people have the support they need at all stages of their learning so they can reach their full potential as highlighted in the National Plan:

“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.”

To contribute to this National Plan priority area (table 3) UWS will:

National Plan priority area 3 - table 3	
Action	Timescale
Review student application forms to include what a student’s primary language is, and present BSL as an option. If BSL is selected, the data will be sent to relevant services to follow up on.	Implemented by 2026.
Update student application forms to encourage students who are BSL users to disclose they use BSL using appropriate language such as ‘D/deaf’ and ‘hard of hearing’ avoiding negative terms such as ‘hearing impairment’, and ‘D/deaf mute’.	Implemented by 2027.
Work with local partners, Higher and Further education institutions to host open days specifically for BSL users.	Implemented by 2028.
Work with local partners, Higher and Further education institutions to hold information sessions for schools for D/deaf children on Higher and Further Education.	Implemented by 2028.
Work with external partners to develop a Role Model project highlighting Further and Higher Education students who are BSL users.	Implemented by 2027.
Ensure that BSL interpreters supporting UWS students are provided with academic support materials beforehand. Interpreters will be given the opportunity to discuss areas of concern within the content, for example: how to sign technical language terms.	Implemented by 2030.
UWS will minimise changes to timetables of students who are BSL users by raising awareness of the impacts of changing timetables at short notice.	Implemented by 2028.
Incorporate information in UWS Learning and Teaching about BSL and D/deaf culture and include resources available in BSL.	Implemented by 2026.

National Priority Area 4: Access to Employment

UWS shares, and will actively contribute towards, the goal to provide BSL users with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career as highlighted in the National Plan:

“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.”

To contribute to this National Plan priority area (table 4) UWS will:

National Plan priority area 4 - table 4	
Action	Timescale
Ensure that, where a BSL user has work- based learning, the appropriate support and understanding is in place.	Implemented by 2030.
Ensure that tailored support is offered to BSL users through the UWS Careers Service.	Implemented by 2027.



National Priority Area 5: Health and Wellbeing

UWS shares, and will actively contribute towards, the goal to ensure BSL users have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives as highlighted in the National Plan:

“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.”

To contribute to this National Plan priority area (table 5) UWS will:

National Plan priority area 5 - table 5	
Action	Timescale
Ensure that staff who are BSL users can access the Employee Assistance Programme.	Implemented by June 2024.
Provide BSL interpreting on request for student counselling and promote this widely. Highlight within promotion that a BSL interpreter who is not directly involved in a student's education can be used to retain anonymity.	Implemented by 2025.



National Priority Area 7: BSL Data

UWS shares, and will actively contribute towards, the goal to strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community as highlighted in the National Plan:

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

To contribute to this National Plan priority area (table 6) UWS will:

National Plan priority area 7 - table 6	
Action	Timescale
Utilise national and UWS specific data on BSL users to inform our decision making where appropriate.	Start in 2024 and thereafter ongoing.
Review the UWS 2024 - 2030 BSL Plan utilising national and UWS specific data on BSL users.	Review to take place at least every two years from implementation of new plan.

UWS will continue the following actions laid out in our 2018 BSL Plan (table 7):

2018 BSL Plan - table 7	
Action	Timescale
Analysing existing evidence we have of users of BSL, including current and future staff and students in our organisation; identifying and filling key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress.	Implemented by 2028.

Contact

Please contact the EDI Team on Equality@uws.ac.uk if you have any questions about the UWS BSL Plan or if you would like to be involved in the development/implementation.

BSL Version of Plan

The BSL version of this plan can be found on the [EDI section of the UWS website](#).

Appendix 1: Previous UWS BSL Action Plan 2018 – 2024 progress

4.1 Across all our services			
Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Analyse existing evidence we have of users of BSL including current and future staff and students in our organisation; identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress.	Not complete	Planning	<p>Data categories in our staff information system were updated to include 'BSL User' as a separate category within 'sensitive information' categories. A campaign to encourage staff to update their data #datamatters ran in July 2020.</p> <p>UWS started recording whether students are British Sign Language users in 2020-21.</p> <p>However, due a cyber incident experienced in June 2023 systems are currently in the process of being re-built. When re-building the staff and student systems these will record if staff or students are BSL Users. This action is carried over into the new action plan.</p>
Improve access to our information and services for BSL users, including making our website more accessible to BSL users by including BSL videos and highlighting BSL accessible ways to get in touch.	Partially completed by 2020	Digital Marketing Information Technology	<p>Since 2020 all videos have subtitles.</p> <p>All student services staff email signatures include contactScotland relay service details.</p> <p>All new videos on UWS Learning and Teaching platforms such as Moodle and Aula are now subtitled to ensure accessibility.</p> <p>New action plan highlights the need to ensure key information is covered in BSL videos.</p>
Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL' to staff and to local BSL users.	Complete with continuous promotion since 2018	All	Contact Scotland promoted by Disability Service and some other Student Services teams via email signature.
Signpost Reception staff and other customer facing staff across the UWS sites to attend BSL awareness training by 2020.	Not fully complete	People and Wellbeing Schools Departments	<p>A BSL entry level course available since 2019 in the School of Education & Social Sciences and Social Sciences this has been promoted to staff, students and the local community.</p> <p>Further BSL Awareness training was being explored pre-covid but was put on hold. This was further explored in 2023 but had to be postponed. BSL awareness training is included in the new action plan.</p>

4.1 Across all our services			
Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Develop a standard guide in how to book BSL interpreters to be available across the institution.	Completed in 2020	Disability Service	Standard guide developed which includes information on how the institution can book interpreters, for staff, guest speakers, and students attending interviews. This guide will be further promoted via the staff intranet and internal staff communication channels.
Commit to reviewing the plan in 2021 after the national progress report in 2020.	Completed in 2021	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team Planning	Progress report completed in 2021.

4.2 Post School Education			
Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Promote support available for BSL for prospective students articulating to UWS.	Completed in 2019	Recruitment Marketing Student Engagement	The support provided by disability services is promoted to all prospective students where relevant. They have a dedicated page on the UWS website where information on support provided can be accessed. There is a captioned video that gives the information on support available for all disabled students.
Provide access to open days for prospective students who use BSL and monitor impact to inform our practice.	Partially completed in 2018	Recruitment Marketing Student Engagement	Partially complete, students who are BSL users get in touch with the school directly who will source an interpreter. However, impact has not yet been consistently monitored, this is included as an action within the new action plan.
Continue to support and promote our services for BSL user through the UWS Student Services, Disability Service.	Completed in 2018	Disability Service	Student Services communication all include contactScotland relay services information. Plan is in place to promote BSL support more widely through Social Media platforms.

4.2 Post School Education			
Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Develop a Role model project highlighting the students at UWS who use the BSL support.	Not completed	Student Services Student Engagement	Project was not completed as students who were able to take part were not interested. This action is included in the new plan but has been amended to take a Higher and Further education wide approach.
Review the Application process to ensure that this is inclusive and supportive and reflects the needs of BSL students.	Completed in 2021	Recruitment Admissions Schools	Data pull is run to show all students who have resisted who have a disability. Disability service proactively contact these students.

4.3 Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare			
Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Provide early years and primary teaching students with information about BSL and Deaf culture, and about resources that are available in BSL, so that they can meet the needs of families with a D/deaf or Deafblind child.	Not completed	School of Education & Social Sciences	Identified that this action should be cross-institutional rather than programme specific. This is reflected in the updated BSL Plan.
Review current Early Years Education Curriculum to identify where BSL education can be included in teaching practice.	Not completed	School of Education & Social Sciences	Identified that this action should be cross-institutional rather than programme specific. This is reflected in the updated BSL Plan.

4.4 School Education			
Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to remove barriers that make it difficult for BSL Users to become registered teacher.	Not completed	School of Education & Social Sciences	Not progressed
Take forward advice developed by Education Scotland to improve the way that students are taught in the education curriculum.	Not Completed	School of Education & Social Sciences	Not progressed
Investigate the development of a module in BSL to be approved by the Education Forum as part of the Languages for All Provision.	Completed in 2019	School of Education & Social Sciences	An entry level BSL module has been progressed within the school of Education and advertised as a language option since 2019. This module is offered to UWS students, staff and the wider community.

4.5 Training, Work and Social Security			
Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Signpost pupils and students to a wide range of information, advice and guidance in BSL about their career and learning choices and the transition process, as part of our widening access work.	Partially completed	Careers Service	The Careers Service have a dedicated page for students who may have additional learning needs. Where a student who is a BSL User makes an appointment with the Careers Service an interpreter would be provided. However, there is currently no advice available on the UWS website or signposted in BSL. The new action plan includes an action on tailored support for BSL users through the UWS Careers Service.
Raise awareness locally of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme for students who use BSL so that they can benefit from the support it provides.	Completed in 2018	Careers Service Disability Service	This information is given routinely to students through disability services.
Review of the student journey for BSL students incorporating careers guidance and support post-graduation.	Not completed	Careers Service	Due to the low number of students who are BSL users at UWS this could not be meaningfully progressed.

4.6 Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Continue to demonstrate best practice support for UWS BSL students through the UWS Student Disability Services.	Completed in 2021	Disability Service	Excellent working relationship established with independent BSL interpreters and agencies. When disability team receives a support request form from a student indicating they are a BSL user they will contact the student to make the necessary arrangements.
Take steps to improve access to information about sport, and other facilities for BSL students at UWS through awareness raising training of front-line staff by 2020.	Partially complete.	Team UWS	All Team UWS videos such as induction etc are subtitled and anything that is put out as part of a campaign. BSL Awareness training was being explored pre-covid but was put on hold. This was further explored in 2023 but had to be postponed. BSL awareness training is included in the new action plan.

4.7 Culture and the Arts

Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Enable BSL users to take part in culture and the arts as participants, audience members and professionals, at UWS.	Completed in 2018	Events	BSL support is provided when it has been identified that this is required.

4.8 Democracy

Action	Complete	Responsible	Progress to Date
Promote BSL provision in the recruitment and selection process for the appointment of governors to University Court.	Not complete	Secretary to Court	No progress to date
Raise awareness of BSL to Court members.	Not complete	Secretary to Court	No progress to date

The logo is a white circle containing the text 'UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST of SCOTLAND' in a small, uppercase, sans-serif font. Below this text is a thin horizontal line, and underneath the line are the large, bold, serif letters 'UWS'.

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