

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture & Communities

Corporate Services Committee: 13 February 2019

British Sign Language Action Plan 2018-2024

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the West Dunbartonshire Council British Sign Language Action Plan 2018-2024, as required by the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to endorse the content of the West Dunbartonshire Council British Sign Language (BSL) Action Plan 2018-2024

3. Background

- 3.1 The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Scottish Government and public authorities, such as Councils and NHS Boards, to produce BSL Action Plans, reviewed every six years. Scottish Government published their first [National BSL Action Plan in October 2017](#), detailing their own commitments alongside the general direction for local plans.
- 3.2 The national aspiration, described in the Scottish Government action plan, is to ensure that BSL users (those individuals whose first or preferred language is BSL) are able to be fully involved in daily and public life as active, healthy citizens able to make informed choices about all aspects of their lives.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1 In line with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and the guidance provided by Scottish Government, work has been underway since early 2018 to develop a West Dunbartonshire BSL action plan. To support this, a local BSL working group was established, involving key officers from across the Council and West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust, including a BSL learner.

4.2 The West Dunbartonshire plan has been developed to align to the template provided by the Scottish Government for Local Authority plans. It sets out current provision and proposed actions in relation to:

- General access across all our services
- Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare
- School Education
- Training, Work and Social Security
- Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and the Arts
- Justice
- Democracy

4.3 While the majority of commitments made relate directly to services provided by Council, additional commitments have been made around signposting and improved partnership working specific to both health and justice.

4.4 The content of the plan aligns very clearly to our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, specifically in relation to making services accessible to all and ensuring equity of access to employment opportunities. This alignment also extends to the commitments made through the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2017-2021, with development of the BSL action plan reported through the Equality and Diversity Working Group along with updates on Equality Outcomes.

4.5 The BSL action plan supports delivery of two specific Equality Outcomes for the Council:

- Increase participation of underrepresented groups
- Increase diversity of the Council workforce

4.6 The BSL action plan for West Dunbartonshire has been developed through consultation with BSL users and learners from the area. An initial consultation draft of the plan was published on the Council website, and a focus group held to gather feedback. This informed the final version of the plan attached as appendix one to this report. Along with the text version of the action plan, videos of each section have been developed and will be published on the Council website.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no direct people implications associated with this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** Recurring external funding of £5,000 per year will be supplied from Scottish Government to help with the implementation of the action plan. It must be noted that this fund should not be used to provide reasonable adjustments for BSL users, as this is something we should already be doing.
- 6.2** Commitments made within the plan should be delivered within the existing budgets of the services responsible.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act sets out the national commitments for delivery. Failure to develop and action plan and implement appropriate actions would not be compliant with the legislation.
- 7.2** It is important that the work to support the BSL plan is integrated with other work on equalities and human rights to gain as much benefit as possible. This can be done by services ensure that such work is clearly represented in their plans, and performance reporting and management.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** The proposed plan is relevant to equalities and therefore has been impacted assessed. The plan identifies areas of action that are likely to have a range of positive effects for Deaf people with a variety of different characteristics. The impact assessment is attached as appendix two to this report.

9. Environmental Sustainability

- 9.1** The proposals in this report represent a qualifying plan, programme, policy or strategy for consideration for SEA. However, it has been determined by officers that the proposals are unlikely to have significant environmental effects. The proposal is therefore exempt from the SEA process and can be pre-screened out. A determination to this effect has been made to the Scottish Government Gateway. An SEA has not been undertaken.

10. Consultation

- 10.1** A BSL working group was formed which included one profoundly deaf person who is a BSL learner. The group also included officers from across a variety of Council services, such as housing, education, HR and citizen services as well as West Dunbartonshire Leisure and West Dunbartonshire health & Social Care Partnership.
- 10.2** A joint consultation session was carried out with NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde in early September to inform content of the action plan. Further engagement was held to review the draft action plan in BSL video, with participants broadly agreeing with its aims.

10.3 An online survey was also carried out, linking to the Council's BSL and English versions of our draft plan. As well as accessing services, respondents saw employment and educational opportunities as priorities.

10.4 Updates on BSL plan progress have been taken to the Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group throughout its development.

11. Strategic Assessment

11.1 The West Dunbartonshire BSL Action Plan 2018-2024, in line with the national ambitions, supports:

- A Strong local economy and improved employment opportunities.
- Supported individuals, families and carers living independently and with dignity.
- Meaningful community engagement with active empowered and informed citizens who feel safe and engaged.
- Open, accountable and accessible local government.
- Efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

Malcolm Bennie

Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture & Communities

15 January 2019

Person to Contact: Amanda Coulthard
Performance and Strategy Manager
Amanda.Coulthard@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: **Appendix 1:** West Dunbartonshire BSL Action Plan 2018-2024 (English Version)
Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards