

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2023



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Introduction

Background

This is the draft British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), produced in compliance with sections two and three of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. The Plan sets out the actions which the SPSO will take over the period 2018-2023 to improve access to information and services for BSL users.

The British Sign Language version of this draft Plan is available on our website.

To the extent that the functions of the Ombudsman are exercisable using BSL, our Plan follows the BSL National Plan, published on 24 October 2017, which was developed by the Scottish Government through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

Our BSL Plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the National Plan, where these are relevant to the work of the Ombudsman, specifically in the area of Scottish Public Services.

Like the National BSL Plan, the SPSO 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 SPSO and our services when they so choose, without unnecessary barriers, including language barriers. The Plan 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 SPSO draft BSL Plan was developed with input from the Scottish Parliament and other parliamentary officeholders, and from feedback gathered from BSL users.

The SPSO is committed to continued engagement around a) implementing actions and b) providing feedback on progress. We see our Plan as a 'living document' and, as such, it will be revised and reissued as necessary. We 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, we have included a review period in 2021.

Contact Details

SPSO's communications team can be contacted with any questions, ideas or suggestions.

Postal Address: FREEPOST SPSO – this is all you have to write on the envelope, you don't have to use a stamp.

Online: www.spso.org.uk

Email: communications@spso.org.uk

Phone: 0131 240 2990

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)
[contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)

Executive Summary

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is committed to ensuring that all members of the public have access to the Ombudsman's broad range of statutory functions. The Ombudsman's power and duties come from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002, which sets out three distinct areas of statutory functions:

1. The final stage for complaints about most devolved public services in Scotland including Councils, the Health Service, Prisons, Water and Sewerage Providers, the Scottish Government, Universities and Colleges.
2. Specific powers and responsibilities to public complaints handling procedures, and monitor and support best practice in complaints handling.
3. Independent Review Service for the Scottish Welfare Fund with the power to overturn and substitute decisions made by councils on community care and crisis grant applications.

From 2018, the SPSO will also take on the role of the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer for the NHS in Scotland.

We recognise our duties to promote equality of opportunity for all, including BSL users. We support the Scottish Government's long-term goal as set out in the BSL National Plan:

"to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit."

Our first BSL Plan sets out ten commitments to support this vision and we will undertake these commitments between now and 2023. We will contribute to the national progress review (interim report) on the National BSL Plan scheduled for 2020 and we will review progress against our own plan in 2021.

Our Commitments

We share 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”

To support this, by 2023 we will:

1. Develop links with BSL user groups and adopt best practice guidelines.
2. Make information about SPSO's functions, and how to access and use our service, accessible to BSL users, including producing new BSL materials.
3. Begin a programme of work to increase the accessibility of our websites.
4. Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL', which allows BSL users to contact public and third sector services, and for these services to contact them.
5. Train our staff to use online interpreting video relay services (such as contactScotland-BSL), and explore the potential for greater use.
6. Raise awareness amongst all staff of the needs of BSL users through training and induction programmes.
7. Respond promptly to requests from BSL users to arrange interpreting when required for access to our services.
8. Develop a diverse workforce by ensuring that we promote our employment opportunities with organisations who represent minority groups, including BSL users.
9. Make training available to staff who have an interest in learning BSL.
10. Gather and share examples of good practice in complaints handling for BSL users if/when we observe this.

Next Steps

What happens next?

We will be accepting comments on this draft plan until 14 September 2018.

We would be interested to hear your thoughts on the commitments we have outlined, if there is anything else you would like to see covered or any other thoughts you may have.

A final version of the plan will be published by October 2018, in English and BSL.

Please contact us if you want to continue to be involved as we further develop/implement the actions in our plan.

How to send us your comments

Video clips or written responses should be sent electronically, if possible, to communications@spso.org.uk.

If you send us a video with your views, please give us your name and tell us if we can use what you say to help us develop our plan. Please also tell us if you would like to be updated on the progress of the Plan.

If you want to send a response by post, the address is:

FREEPOST SPSO – this is all you need to write on the envelope and you do not need to use a stamp.

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)
contactSCOTLAND-BSL

Phone: 0131 240 2990

What we will do with your information

We will use the information that you give us to help us develop our BSL Plan. We will also use your contact details to keep you informed about the progress of the Plan, but only if you tell us that you want us to do this. We will store your response securely until we have published our next BSL Plan, then delete it.

If you send us a video with your views, we will:

- translate what you say from BSL into English;
- store a copy of your video securely until our BSL Plan has been published, then destroy it;
- store your name securely until our BSL Plan has been published, then destroy it; and
- store the English translation of your video until we have published our next BSL Plan, then delete it.

We will share your video only with our contractors so they can provide a translation and with the people helping to develop our BSL plan.

You can find the full version of our privacy notice on our website at:

<https://www.spso.org.uk/privacy-notice-and-disclaimer>

If you want to know more about how we will handle your information, please ask us.

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