

SPSO British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2025-2031



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1. Introduction

1.1 About SPSO

1.1.1 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) has four distinct statutory functions as set out in the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002:

1. The final stage for complaints about most devolved public services in Scotland.
2. Specific powers and responsibilities to publish complaints handling procedures, and monitor and support best practice.
3. Independent review service for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF).
4. Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) for the NHS in Scotland.

1.1.2 We are driven by our deep-rooted values of being:

1. People centred – we treat people with dignity and respect making ourselves accessible and deliver a compassionate service.
2. Fair – we are a rights-based organisation making evidence-based decisions.
3. Independent – we are transparent, act with integrity and explain our actions.
4. Learning & improving – we listen to feedback and review our decisions.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 The [British Sign Language \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires certain bodies, including the SPSO, to produce a British Sign Language (BSL) Plan every six years. As demonstrated by our values, it is important to us that we provide a service accessible to all.

1.2.2 The BSL plan is based on various key priority areas outlined in the [National BSL Plan](#) that are most relevant to our service. It also builds on the 2018-2024 BSL Plan.



2. Review of BSL Plan 2018-2024

2.1 Progress

2.1.1 In 2018 the SPSO published its [first BSL Plan](#). This plan set out a number of aims to improve access to information and services for our BSL service users over the period of 6 years.

2.1.2 Many of these aims have been achieved, including:

- The creation of an accessibility section on our website to make information more accessible to BSL users. Please see the website here: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion | SPSO](#).
- A programme of work to increase the accessibility of our wider websites was implemented including changes to the website based on an accessibility audit.
- The Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services Contact Scotland BSL has been adopted and promoted
- Staff have also received a training session from Contact Scotland BSL
- BSL versions for all leaflets and BSL interpreting services are available on request.

2.2 Future aims

2.2.1 Despite these successes, we recognise there is further work to do.

Our aim is to continue building on the achievements of our last plan. For example, strengthening links to BSL groups and adopting the latest best practice guidance.

In addition, we aim to improve access to employment by making this one of the key areas from the [Government's National BSL Plan](#) to focus on in our own BSL plan.

We hope that through these actions and the new BSL plan, the historically low number of BSL service users will increase as our service becomes more accessible.



3. BSL Plan 2025-2031

3.1 Access to Justice

Long-term goal in BSL National Plan:
<i>BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland.</i>

3.1.1 Our aim:

- Enhance access to services provided by SPSO for BSL users.

3.1.2 How:

- Provide BSL awareness training to staff who the training is relevant for. The training will be delivered in cohorts with the first cohort including staff who the training is most relevant. After two years, all cohorts will have completed the training.
- Include BSL guidance in staff inductions.

3.1.3 When:

- Provide training to the first cohort by 2027. Complete the two-year programme by 2029.
- Include BSL guidance in staff inductions by 2026.

3.2 Accessibility

Long-term goal in BSL National Plan:
<i>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. Adopting latest best practice. Commit to working with stakeholders to review accessibility of our website.</i>

3.2.1 Our aim:

- Remove barriers for BSL users when accessing our website.



3.2.2 How:

- Adopt latest best practice for website accessibility.

3.2.3 When:

- Website accessibility is reviewed continuously.

3.3 Children, Young People and Their Families

Long-term goal in BSL National Plan:
<i>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.</i>

3.3.1 Our aim:

- Providing children, young people and their families with the right support.

3.3.2 How:

- Translate the [Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles](#) into BSL.

3.3.3 When:

- BSL translation of the Principles by 2028.

3.3.4 Resources intended for children will not be translated, as they have told us that they would rather speak to a trusted person rather than going through the complaints process. If there is an appetite for resources in future, these would be translated into BSL further down the line.



3.4 Access to Employment

Long-term goal in BSL National Plan:
<i>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.</i>

3.4.1 Our aim:

- Improve the application process for BSL users.
- Make our workplace more BSL friendly.

3.4.2 How:

- Provide adjustments for BSL users applying to work at the SPSO.
- Through candidate attraction, selection and targeting groups underrepresented our workforce will become more BSL friendly.

3.4.3 When:

- Application process support to be offered by 2028.
- BSL friendly workforce by 2031.

3.5 Democratic Participation

Long-term goal in BSL National Plan:
<i>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.</i>

3.5.1 Our aim:

- Empower BSL users to have their say on our decisions that affect them.

3.5.2 How:

- Translate at least one document this year.



- Translate all large-scale public consultations into BSL.

3.5.3 When:

- The BSL plan will be translated in 2025.
- All other large scale public consultations will be translated by 2031.

3.6 BSL Data

Long-term goal in BSL National Plan:
<i>To strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community in Scotland to better inform decision making in public policy and service design.</i>

3.6.1 We already capture and report on BSL data in our equalities monitoring.

3.6.2 We aim to:

- Enhance the data we have on BSL users to make more informed decisions.

3.6.3 How:

- Continue to track and report on the number of BSL enquiries made.

3.6.4 When:

- Produce report by 2026.



4. Contact us

4.1 Our details

4.1.1 SPSO's Improvement, Standards and Engagement 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.spsso.org.uk

Email: ISE-communications@spsso.org.uk

Phone: 0131 240 2990

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [Contact Scotland BSL](#)

4.2 What we will do with your information

4.2.1 We will use the information provided to us by you to help us implement our BSL Plan and inform future versions of this plan. We will not use your contact details to keep you informed about the progress of the plan unless you tell us that you want us to do this. We will store your response securely until we have published our next BSL Plan, after which point we will delete your response.

4.2.2 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 next BSL Plan has been published and delete it after.
- Store your name securely until our next BSL Plan has been published and delete it after.
- Store the English translation of your video until we have published our next BSL Plan and delete it after.



- 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

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

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

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