Heriot-Watt University British Sign Language Local Plan

2018-2024

Heriot-Watt University BSL Local Plan

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1.   Foreword

1.1   The Heriot-Watt University community is rich, diverse and global, with wide ranging diversity. We welcome this opportunity to create a British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan that shows how we are making sure that the Deaf Community, BSL users and those with specialist BSL skills are valued and at the heart of our University community.

1.2   We are committed to creating and maintaining a Culture of Inclusion for All. Part of this commitment is about ensuring we have a supportive environment for prospective and current staff and students, alongside those who visit and work with us. We envisage a community where everyone is aware and understands how to access the support services we have to make sure all members of our community can participate. Where our culture is open, accessible and supportive to all.

1.3   This first BSL Local Plan covers 2018-2024. However, this is not a static plan. While our core commitments will remain consistent our activities and actions will change overtime, as they should. We will make sure our BSL Local Plan is monitored and updated regularly so that we can demonstrate our progress.

1.4   We have developed this BSL Local Plan in consultation with those who use our services and who are part of our community. We will remain open to feedback and creating space to help us continue to make improvements.

Ann Marie Dalton-Pillay

Secretary of the University

2.   Contact Details

2.1   For any information relating to our BSL Local Plan 2018-24 please contact:

equality@hw.ac.uk

  2.2   Our BSL Local Plan can be found at www.hw.ac.uk/services/equality-diversity/bsl-local-plan.htm

3.   Background

i)   National Context

3.1   The Scottish Government British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023 sets out the aspiration that 'The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit'. In the BSL National Plan the Scottish Ministers set out their strategy to promote, and facilitate the promotion of, the use and understanding of the sign language known as British Sign Language.

3.2   The aim of the national plan for higher education is that students 'will be supported to transition to post- school education if they wish to do so and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s)'[1]

3.3   Public bodies such as Heriot-Watt University are required to develop, consult on and publish a clear, measurable plan, reviewed and renewed every 6 years.

3.4   Ministers expect universities to –

- publish a plan
- set out how students who use BSL are supported
- demonstrate a clear measurable commitment to improvement where necessary
- plan links with outcome agreements
- ensure that inequalities experienced by D/deaf and Deafblind BSL students are being addressed
- Expand and develop our academic programmes in a way that will encourage and increase applications from BSL users/Deaf applicants

3.5   The national plan clearly outlines the expectation that across Scotland BSL is recognised as a language in its own right and as a first or preferred language for BSL users D/deaf and/or Deafblind people. Alongside this recognition is the requirement to take forward tangible activities to ensure BSL users' full access to participate in society.

ii)   Heriot-Watt University Context

3.6   Heriot-Watt has a long association with the Deaf/deaf community. We have a reputation as a centre of excellence in Deaf interpreting and research. Our links to broader society has been demonstrated by the involvement of

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[1] Scottish Government British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017 -2023

members of our immediate and extended community taking an active role in developing the Scottish Government's approach to the BSL national plan. Our local community have taken a lead role in developing the Heriot-Watt BSL Local Plan.

3.7 The development of our BSL Local Plan was overseen by a Working Group bringing together expertise from Languages and Cultural Studies, the Disability Service and Equality and Diversity function. In addition input and expertise was sought from functions covering communications, student recruitment and student admissions.

3.8 The purpose of the Working Group was to create an outline plan for endorsement by the University's senior management team, offer the draft plan for consultation, and make final amendments ahead of publication.

3.9 The work of the group was sponsored by the University Secretary, who oversees activities across the broader equality and diversity agenda. The University Secretary has supported the documentation through development to formal approval.

3.10 While the BSL Local Plan stands on its own our approach is to integrate with our HWU Equality Outcomes. Our Equality Outcomes cover 2017-2021, with a mid-point review in 2019.

3.11 Our Equality Outcomes are arranged into two overarching areas with the aim of creating and maintaining a Culture of Inclusion for All:

- **Fundamentals for Success**: addressing those activities we will be taking forward over 2017-21 covering underpinning areas such as data collection and reporting

- **Equality and Diversity Interventions**: includes more project related work usually spanning two year timeframes for review and refresh in 2019. Our expectation is to align the actions contained in this plan from 2019 onwards.

3.12 Arranging our Equality Outcomes in this way helps us be responsive to the changing external environment and support our focus on a Culture of Inclusion for All, as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Progressing a Culture of Inclusion for all

Fundamentals for Success 2017-21

Equality and Diversity Interventions 2017-2019

Equality and Diversity Interventions 2019-2021

Culture of Inclusion for All

3.13 Underpinning these structural arrangements is the need for cultural and behavioural change which supports embedding equality and diversity focused activities through the University. Our Values continue to be a mechanism for embedding and enhancing equality and diversity across Heriot-Watt, these characteristics set us apart and this distinctive 'spirit' is encapsulated in our values:

Figure 2: Our Values

Valuing and Respecting Everyone
Pursuing Excellence
Pride and Belonging
Shaping the Future
Outward Looking

3.14 While there are legal drivers for our Equality Outcomes our push toward a Culture of Inclusion for All is about understanding we all have a role to play. We have a shared responsibility where each of us contributes to our equality and diversity goals.

3.15 We have used a range of involvement activities to ensure that our BLS Local Plan is informed by BSL users and led by the Working Group with has included an engagement session in June 2018 and involvement opportunities running throughout summer 2018. Our formal consultation ended on 19

October 2018, though we are open to comment and feedback throughout the lifespan of the BSL Local Plan.

4. Core commitments

4.1 Our Local Plan is a commitment to:

- adopting an institution-wide approach to implementation
- building on our existing expertise in BSL teaching, research and support
- improving methods of communication for BSL users
- increasing access to information, advice and guidance for BSL users
- creating a supporting environment for prospective and current staff and students

4.2 We will only achieve our aims and objectives if we take in **institutional wide approach** to implementing our BSL Local Plan. Each School and Service area and all members of the University community will be supported to be aware of the University's commitments alongside how they contribute.

4.3 We recognise that there is a need to **build on our existing expertise** to provide support for BSL users across learning, teaching, research and support functions. We also need to provide support for non-BSL users to upskill and provide guidance.

4.4 In **improving communication for BSL users** to make sure all members of the University community are fully participate in University life we must also effectively communicate why and how our existing ways of communicating and involving must change and adapt to be more inclusive. To achieve this there is a real need to **improve access to information, advice and guidance** for BSL users alongside the whole University community.

4.5 We want to make sure our work and activities are of the highest quality. We only use Registered Sign Language Translators in all our BSL specific activities.

5. Target Groups and Key Strands of our BSL Local Plan

5.1 In developing our BSL Local Plan we have identified target groups with specific needs as outlined in Table 1: Target Groups below.

Target Group	Description
Prospective	Those who are prospective staff and students, those who are looking to find out more about Heriot-Watt and are interested in what we have to offer.
Joiners	Those who are recently part the Heriot-Watt as newly enrolled students or recently induced staff members.
Existing	Those who have studied or worked with Heriot-Watt beyond the joiner phase.
Stakeholders	Those who have a particular interest in Heriot-Watt, visitors, partners and the local community.

Table 1: Target Groups

5.2 In developing our actions we have taken each of these groups into consideration. We want to make sure that BSL is acknowledged and embraced and that our actions are fit for purpose across the range of groups that are part of the overall Heriot-Watt community.

5.3 To meet our core commitments we have identified key strands that need to be effectively taken forward:

- Communication and inclusivity
- Training and support
- Expansion and promotion of Heriot-Watt University BSL community resource
- Raising and meeting expectations

5.4 **Communication and inclusivity**. To be effective in our approach we must communicate so that BSL users are aware of our commitments. We also must make sure that all members of the University fully understand their role in supporting those commitments.

5.5 **Training and Support**. Training and support is necessary to make sure that the implementation of our BSL Local Plan is effective. Our training
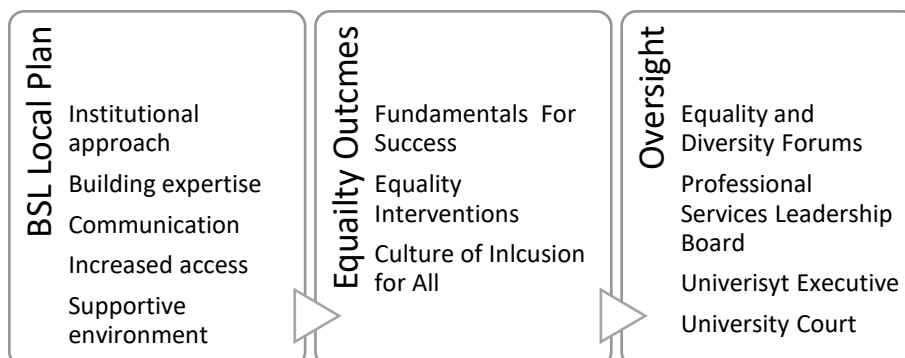
support should be developed and delivered with the full involvement of BSL users.

5.6 **Expansion and promotion of Heriot-Watt BSL community resource**. We have significant capacity at Heriot-Watt where we can make better use of the expertise of we already have, but as we raise expectations we will also raise demand on our services. There is a need for monitoring uptake and use of support so we can be effective in forward resource planning.

5.7 **Raising and meeting expectations**. For BSL users *and* for non-BSL users there is a pressing need for everyone to understand there is an expectation of mainstreamed use of BSL in priority and target areas. Above all it recognises that we all have a role to play in making that mainstreaming a reality.

5.8 Our action plan at section 7 shows how we will address issues linked to each of these target groups. We show our evidence base, who is responsible, our success measures and timescales.

6. Implementation and monitoring

6.1 Implementation and monitoring of the BSL Local Plan will be part of our oversight processes for equality and diversity, outlined in section 2.

6.2 We will integrate our BSL Local Plan into our approach to Equality Outcomes with monitoring and report via our governance structures as shown below.

Figure 3: Integrating the BSL Local Plan to our existing structures

BSL Local Plan	Equailty Outcmes	Oversight
Institutional approach	Fundamentals For Success	Equality and Diversity Forums
Building expertise	Equality Interventions	Professional Services Leadership Board
Communication	Culture of Inlcusion for All	Univerisyt Executive
Increased access		University Court
Supportive environment		

7. BSL Local Plan Action Plan 2018-24

1.   Communication and Inclusivity*

*HWU will be using a variety of means to improve immediate access while exploring bespoke actions:

- contactSCOTLAND provides a video relay service for instances where a BSL users are looking to contact particular parts of the University

Identified Action	Target Group(s)	Evidence Base	Responsible Area/Officer	Success Measure	Timescale
1.1 Website is clear and accessible: Develop BSL interface with links to videos for main web content	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Current website had very little and hard to find BSL content	Main webpages – Web Officer School/Service webpages local responsible officer	All major information on website includes BSL interpretation and embedded use of contactSCOTLAND	2024 Interpreting and production costs
1.2 contactSCOTLAND trailed ahead of embedding across website	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Current website had very little and hard to find BSL content	Main webpages – Web Officer School/Service webpages local responsible officer	Successful contactSCOTLAND trail following check in with users	2018
1.3 contactSCOTLAND embedded into website	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Current website had very little and hard to find BSL content	Main webpages – Web Officer School/Service webpages local responsible officer	contactSCOTLAND link included on all web pages	2020
1.4 Visual media includes BSL interpretation. All Staff/All Student media should include use of BSL	• Prospective • Joiners	Equality Outcomes	Corporate Communications	BSL use on website and on	2024

	• Existing • Stakeholders		DLT	relevant video outputs	Interpreting and production costs
1.5 BSL interpretation at open days e.g. during welcome address	• Prospective • Stakeholders	Open days currently don't routinely use BSL. Build on example of Brightest WATTs	Student Recruitment	BSL interpretation as standard	2022 Interpreting costs
1.6 BSL interpretation at all graduations	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Continuing existing provision and looking to ensure improvements	Academic Registry	BSL interpretation as standard	2018 Interpreting costs
1.7 BSL interpretation at HWU AGM, inaugural lectures, distinguished lectures, open weekends	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Continuing existing provision and looking to ensure improvements	Research and Enterprise Services	BSL interpretation as standard	2020 Interpreting costs
1.8 Open employee meetings include BSL interpretation during some sessions	• Joiners • Existing	Build into open sessions	Corporate Communications	BSL interpretation as standard	2019
1.9 Further development of Safe Zone to ensure accessibility for BSL users	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing	Current Safe Zone is some accommodations for Deaf users but further exploration of BSL accommodations are needed	Safe Guarding Services	BSL incorporated into Safe Zone	2020
1.10 Review HR processes to ensure accessibility for BSL user employees	• Prospective • Joiners	Currently processes do	HRD	BSL incorporated into HR processes	2020

| | | • Existing | not include BSL formats | | including contactSCOTLAND use | |

2. Training and support

Identified Action	Target Group(s)	Evidence Base	Responsible Area/Officer	Success Measure	Timescale
2.1 Locally developed and delivered BSL awareness and 'How to chit chat' sessions	• Joiners • Existing	Most staff and students have little or no knowledge of BSL	E&D/OD	• Development of training • Delivery of training • Uptake of training	• 2018 • 2019 • 2019 -2024
2.2 Locally developed and delivered 'Working with Interpreters' sessions – including consideration of inclusion in PGCAP	• Joiners • Existing	Most staff and students have little or no knowledge or experience of working with BSL/English interpreters	E&D/OD/ALD	• Development of training • Delivery of training • Uptake of training	• 2018 • 2019 • 2019 -2024
2.3 Clear understanding of how to source support for BSL users	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Currently information is not readily available	Working group	Information available and publicised in BSL and English	2019
2.4 Clear access to BSL for BSL users e.g. signposting for BSL interpreted materials and events	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Currently information is not readily available	Working group	Information available and publicised in BSL and English	2019

2.5 Pilot sessions with BSL interpretation at student service areas. **(intervention project requires buy-in from lead areas**)	• Joiners • Existing	No sessions are currently in place – this will test need	Student Service Centre/Project group established	• Pilot developed • Pilot run • Pilot evaluated • Rollout dependent on pilot evaluation	• 2018/19 • 2019 • 2020 • 2021-24
2.6 System to flag need for BSL support – to be included in Student Information Desk portal. **(intervention project requires buy-in from lead areas)**	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Nothing currently in place	Academic Registry/Project group established	Information available and publicised in BSL and English	2019
2.7 Guidance on BSL use for all staff - includes creating a clear dissemination and communication plan across all parts of HWU – including application in Dubai and Malaysia	• Joiners • Existing	Nothing currently in place	Working Group and Corporate Communications	Information available and publicised in BSL and English	2019 Interpreting and production costs
2.8 Take steps to ensure consistency of BSL support to students and staff members	• Joiners • Existing	Need for guidelines in assessing support to include consistency	Working Group	Consistency of support to students undertaking academic study. Consistency of support for staff and visiting academics	2024 (throughout Plan)

3.	Expansion and promotion of Heriot-Watt University BSL community resource					
Identified Action		**Target Group(s)**	**Evidence Base**	**Responsible Area/Officer**	**Success Measure**	**Timescale**
3.1 Enhancing Heriot-Watt University's reputation as a centre of excellence		• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Build on current reputation	Corporate Communication and LINCs	Increase in external profile	2024 (throughout Plan)
3.2 Develop intranet site for staff to be aware of in-house expertise and how to access		• Joiners • Existing	Currently nothing in place	Working Group	Information available and publicised in BSL and English	2019
3.3 Promote Heriot-Watt as a supportive community with networks and events for BSL users		• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Currently information is shared with a relatively closed group	Working Group	Well established networks with increases presence in internal comms	2020
3.4 Consult and involve BSL users on recognised and supported symbol for use across media and events to acknowledge BSL use		• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	There are a range of symbols that can be used we should have one agreed by the HWU community	Working Group	Symbol in place and widely used	2019
3.5 Use of events calendar to highlight BSL use in events/activities		• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Nothing currently in place or widely recognised	Working Group	Annual Calendar of events – events included in HWU event calendar	2019

3.6 Specific and targeted publicising of BSL events – opt-in contact list	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Opt-in bulletin targeted at BSL users not currently in place	Working Group	Opt-in contact list in place and minimum of 3 contact emails per year	2024 (throughout Plan)
3.7 Development of BSL glossaries for technical vocabulary associated with programmes of study being undertaken by students who use BSL, where no signs currently exist	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Some joint work already underway with Moray House in the Scottish Sensory Centre	LINCs/Project Group	BSL glossaries for technical vocabulary in place – indexed by relevant academic area	2024 (throughout Plan) Requires budget support

4.	Raising and meeting expectations					

Identified Action	Target Group(s)	Evidence Base	Responsible Area/Officer	Success Measure	Timescale
4.1 Staff are aware of the BSL Local Plan and their role in delivery	• Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Nothing in place	Working Group	Annual reporting and 3 news pieces per year to raise awareness	2024 (throughout Plan)
4.2 Annual monitoring via University committee	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Nothing in place	Working Group	Annual report to PSLB and UE	2019-2024
4.3 Public reporting every 2 years from 2020 on BSL Local Plan	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Nothing in place	Working Group/ Equality and Diversity Partner	Update report midpoint report Final report New plan All available in in English and BSL video update	2020 2022 2023 2024 Interpreting and production costs
4.4 Improve access to work experience placements for BSL users	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Nothing in place – Project Group required	Project Group	HWU offers BSL placements	2024 (throughout Plan)
4.5 Explore option of offering shared accommodation to student BSL users – BSL language residency scheme **(intervention project requires buy-in from lead areas)**	• Prospective • Joiners • Existing • Stakeholders	Number of BSL students and uptake on HWU accommodation	Accommodation Services and Student Welfare Support	• Project initiation to explore potential uptake • Accommodation user engagement • Pilot project • Pilot evaluation	• 2019 • 2019 • 2020 • 2021 • 2022-24

					• Roll out dependent on project evaluation	
4.6 Develop BSL interface for use during Clearing **(intervention project requires buy-in from lead areas)**	• Prospective • Stakeholders	Nothing in place	Clearing Project Lead	BSL included on web information and dedicated time set up to respond to BSL needs	2020
4.7 Develop BSL programme to run with Education Liaison and support BSL user UG increase **(intervention project requires buy-in from lead areas)**	• Prospective • Joiners	Nothing in place – Project Group required	Project Group	Increase in uptake of support by BSL users	2024 (throughout Plan)

* Areas for Further Consideration and Development

In the development of this first BSL Local Plan there have been some area raised for potential development. They have not been explicitly included in the plan, but we hope through our activities to keep such areas in view. We make sure that support is available across the University community, this includes taking cognisance of the specific needs of Deafblind people. As the BSL Local Plan further develops where appropriate these actions will be incorporated into the BSL Local Plan.