British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

Forth Valley College

Making Learning Work

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

SECTION 1:

1.1 Introduction

In 2015, the Scottish Parliament passed the British Sign Language (BSL) Scotland Act. This Act acknowledged the need for Scottish society to recognise the cultural and linguistic identity of Deaf and Deafblind people who use BSL. BSL users face a communication barrier when accessing public services, including education, and this Act places an expectation on Public Bodies to work towards ensuring BSL users can access their service in an equitable way to non-BSL users.

In October 2017, the Scottish Government published their National Plan. This plan outlines the actions that the Scottish Government will take over the next six years to redress the challenges that BSL users face when accessing public services. This National Plan forms the framework for all public bodies' plans and Forth Valley College is expected to align their plan with the National Plan as closely as possible.

Context

Forth Valley College is a Further (FE) and Higher (HE) education institution with over 8500 full-time; part-time; evening and flexible learning students currently enrolled. At the time of writing this plan, we have two students who are BSL users and no staff members. We service students across three local authority areas; Clackmannan, Falkirk and Stirling.

As a college, FVC is committed to inclusivity and this is embedded within our mission, vision and values. We commit to working towards a future where BSL and tactile BSL users can access all public services in an equal manner to non-BSL users. This document outlines how we will begin to work towards that goal over the next six years.

Consultation

In order to develop the final plan, FVC's draft BSL plan was made available online in English; consultation events were held and we gathered feedback from consultation events held by others. We also worked closely with colleagues at Deaf Action; attended BSL Roadshows hosted by Deaf Scotland and participated actively in discussions with other colleges from other FE and HE institutions about creating a BSL Plan.

As a college, we have not had as much engagement from the Deaf community as we would have liked and that in itself has been a useful piece of learning. We have learned that we need to reach out to the Deaf community to encourage BSL users to engage with the College. As we move forward, implementing our plan, we will continue to work hard to engage with BSL

users and continually reflect where we find success and where more work or a different approach is required.

The Lifetime of the Plan

Throughout the lifetime of our plan, we commit to ongoing consultation with the Deaf community and welcome any and all feedback on our plan, its action points and how those action points are implemented.

In addition to this, we will share our experiences of implementing the action points and feedback on our progress with the hope that other public bodies will do the same. This will allow us to learn from the experiences of others as well as from our own. In 2020, we will produce a report on the progress of our plan and we will contribute to the National Progress report also.

1.2 Name of Lead Officer (please contact with any questions, comments or feedback)

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1.3 BSL Version of Our Plan

You can find the BSL version of our plan on our website.

SECTION 2

Executive Summary

Forth Valley College has a reputation for striving towards equity and inclusion. However, when it comes to working with BSL users, we have often been reactive rather than proactive. Like many public bodies, we welcome BSL users when they wish to access our service. Nevertheless, we need to do more to proactively engage with BSL users to show them what services we offer; how they can access them; how we can support them during their time at College; what experiences they can gain from College and how we can support them after their time at College has come to an end.

This plan aims to take the first steps towards ensuring equity of access to Forth Valley College for BSL users. The plan outlines what steps FVC will take between October 2018 and June 2020 when the first National Progress Report is due. We consider this plan an organic document which will grow and change over time. The plan will respond to local and national priorities as well as feedback from BSL users and other stakeholders.

The overarching aims of set out in this plan are;

- To ensure that BSL users can access key college information and that family members who are BSL users can access key information available to parents and carers
- To ensure that BSL users can contact the College and the College can contact them when required
- To ensure that BSL users are adequately supported during their time at college and during transition periods
- To ensure that BSL users can engage with the whole college experience

SECTION 3

BSL PLAN FOR FORTH VALLEY COLLEGE

3.1: Across All Our Services

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"*

Aim 3.1.1	To analyse existing data we hold on current students and staff and prospective students and staff who use BSL in our college; identify information gaps and seek out key information in order to establish a quantitative baseline against which to measure our progress.
Timeframe	December 2018
Department(s) Responsible	Equalities & Inclusion and Information Systems

Aim 3.1.2	To improve information and services for students and prospective students who use BSL; including making our online offering, application process and virtual learning environment more accessible to BSL users.
Timeframe	June 2019
Department(s) Responsible	Equalities & Inclusion and Marketing

Aim 3.1.3	To promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services (VRS) 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL', which allows BSL users to contact the College directly, like any other student, and for the College to contact them.
Timeframe	December 2018
Department(s) Responsible	Marketing

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

Aim 3.1.4	To break down communication barriers by rolling out Deaf Awareness training for front facing staff who interact with students, staff and visitors across the College, as well as to teaching staff and Curriculum Managers interacting with BSL users on course.
Timeframe	June 2020 for all Information Assistants, Student Services team, Learning Support team, Learning Services team, Facilities Assistants, Gym Assistants and Canteen staff. Ongoing for new staff to these teams and to specific departments as and when BSL users enrol on a course.
Department(s) Responsible	Human Resources

3.2: Post-School Education

We share the long-term goal for post- school education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *"BSL users will be able to maximise their potential at school, 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)"*

Aim 3.2.1	To ensure that students and prospective students who use BSL are properly supported. This will include: • Encouraging BSL users who are interested in applying for College to alert us to this fact early in the process so that we can provide appropriate support. • Providing accessible information about what BSL users can expect from the college. • Ensuring full access to open days for prospective students who use BSL and exploring the level of interest in specific open day(s) for BSL users. • Support, consultation and engagement with (prospective) students throughout the student journey; exploring the potential for alternative forms of application and other adaptations for BSL users from the outset. • Support during the transition process, in collaboration with both the student and the school and college. Similarly, for students moving on to further study, between the student, college and university. • Access to information within the college campus.
Timeframe	June 2020

Department(s) Responsible	Equalities & Inclusion, Student Records, Student Services and Health and Safety

Aim 3.2.2	Take on board guidance produced by the SFC and others to ensure staff across the College are aware of their responsibilities towards BSL users.
Timeframe	Ongoing
Department(s) Responsible	Senior Management Team and Equalities & Inclusion

Aim 3.2.3	Invite continuous feedback from students/prospective students and staff who use BSL in appropriate format(s).
Timeframe	Ongoing
Department(s) Responsible	Equalities & Inclusion, Learning and Quality and Human Resources

Aim 3.2.4	Commit to reviewing, and where appropriate, refreshing this plan to include more 'local' actions after the national progress report in October 2020.
Timeframe	December 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Equalities & Inclusion

Aim 3.2.5	Provide assistance to students who use BSL to help them move onwards from college, including support to complete UCAS applications, SAAS forms and exploring external support such as Access to Work.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Student Services

3.3: Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

We share the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: **"**_The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a D/deaf or Deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL_"

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Aim 3.3.1	To ensure that the parent and carer section of the College's website is accessible to BSL users so that BSL users, who are parents or carers, can access the same information in an equitable manner to non-BSL users.
Timeframe	June 2019
Department(s) Responsible	Marketing

3.4: School Education

We share the long-term goal for school education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *"Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child's education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school"*

Aim 3.4.1	To explore creating stronger links with local schools, in particular, those with a large amount of Deaf pupils, to allow those pupils to accesses Schools Partnership Programmes and/or tailor made College taster programmes equally and led by the needs of the individuals or group.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Learning and Quality

3.5: Training, Work and Social Security

We share the long-term goal for training, work and social security set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *"BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish 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"*

Aim 3.5.1	Raise awareness of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' scheme for students who use BSL towards the end of their course, so that they can benefit from the support it provides when they enter the world of work.
Timeframe	September 2019
Department(s) Responsible	Equalities & Inclusion, Curriculum Managers and Student Services

Aim 3.5.2	Raise awareness of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' scheme for staff so that they can see what support is available for BSL users in order

	to dispel any preconceived ideas about what are or are not appropriate areas of study for BSL users.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Equalities & Inclusion, Curriculum Managers and Student Services

3.6: Health (including Social Care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

We share the long-term goal for health, mental health and wellbeing set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *"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"*

Aim 3.6.1	To take steps to ensure that health and mental health services (including advice and counselling services) within the college are fully accessible to students who use BSL.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Equalities and Inclusion, Student Services and Core and Essential Skills

Aim 3.6.2	To take steps to ensure that health and mental health services (including advice and counselling services) offered by the college are fully accessible to staff who use BSL.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Human Resources

Aim 3.6.3	To consider and investigate the potential marketing of health and social care courses directly to BSL users in order to encourage more BSL users into these professions.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Care, Health & Construction and Marketing

3.7: Culture and the Arts

We share the long-term goal for culture and the arts set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *"BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland"*

Aim 3.7.1	To ensure that extracurricular and recreational activities offered within the college, such as creation or membership of student groups; access to the gym and class representative and student officer posts are accessible to students who use BSL.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Student Association

3.8: Democracy

We share the long-term goal for democracy set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *"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"*

Aim 3.8.1	To ensure that all information on College board elections and Student Association election as well as information on taking an active part in civic life in general is available to BSL users.
Timeframe	June 2020
Department(s) Responsible	Senior Management Team, Student Association and Core and Essential Skills

SECTION 4:

Feedback and Progress Report

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

We welcome all feedback on our BSL plan and on how we implement the actions within. Please send your feedback to anna.vogt@forthvalley.ac.uk or call on 01324 403113. We welcome feedback in any format, including signed videos.

Please contact Anna Vogt at anna.vogt@forthvalley.ac.uk if you want to continue to be involved as we continue to revise and improve the actions in our plan. A progress report and updated plan will be published in October 2020.

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