



# British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

2024-2030

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## Purpose

Section 2 of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 states that public authorities must publish an Authority Plan in which they set out measures they will take for the use of British Sign Language (BSL) in connection with the exercise of their functions.

The Authority Plan must be published within six months from the publication of British Sign Language (BSL): national plan 2023 to 2029, developed by Scottish Government. And our plan must support the commitments set out within the national plan.

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Authority (SCTS) BSL Plan sets out the actions we intend to take to promote BSL and support BSL users (including tactile BSL) over the period covering 2024 to 2030.

You can also view this plan in a BSL video on our website.

## Foreword from Chief Executive, Eric McQueen

I am honoured to introduce our organisation's second British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-2030. In today's ever changing society, it is imperative that the Scottish justice system adapts to the diverse needs of all individuals, including those within the Deaf community.

This comprehensive BSL Plan stands as a testament to our commitment to fostering an environment where every citizen can access justice equitably. By recognising and addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals who communicate primarily through BSL, we aim to remove barriers and ensure that our courts and tribunals are truly accessible to all.

We have developed a plan that not only meets statutory requirements but also reflects the values of fairness, equality, and dignity upon which the Scottish justice system is built upon. The court service plays a vital role in the justice system and our own values compel us to strive for excellence. This plan is not merely a document; but a living plan and roadmap for transformation, outlining concrete steps to embed BSL accessibility across all facets of our operations.

Central to our approach is the principle of collaboration. We recognise that achieving true accessibility requires partnership and shared responsibility. I extend my gratitude to all those who have contributed their expertise and insights to the development of this plan which shapes our vision so we provide a more inclusive service for our users. As we implement this plan, we remain committed to ongoing engagement, feedback, and evaluation. We understand that our journey toward accessibility is continuous and evolving. By remaining responsive to the needs of the Deaf community, we can ensure that our efforts lead to meaningful and lasting change.

I am immensely proud to present this BSL Plan on behalf of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. It signifies not only a milestone in our organisational journey but also a reaffirmation of our shared commitment to justice for all. Together, let us continue to strive toward a future where accessibility is not just a goal but a reality for every individual who interacts with the services we provide.



## About SCTS

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) is a non-ministerial office established by the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008. Its statutory function is to provide administrative support to the Scottish courts, devolved tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG).

The SCTS has a presence in many communities across Scotland. Court and tribunal business is conducted daily across the country in over 40 locations and, in the case of tribunal business, some 70 further remote locations.

In addition to administering Scotland's courts and tribunals, SCTS supports the Office of the Public Guardian and Accountant of Court. The OPG supervises those individuals who have been appointed to manage the financial and property affairs of adults who lack capacity to do so for themselves; investigates circumstances where their property or financial affairs appear to be at risk; registers deeds and other orders made in terms of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000; offers support and guidance to customers; and maintains the public register in respect of AWI registrations. The Public Guardian is also the Accountant of Court.

The SCTS also provides the staff and administrative support to:

- the Scottish Civil Justice Council, which drafts rules of procedure for the civil courts and advises the Lord President on the development of the civil justice system;
- the Scottish Sentencing Council, responsible for preparing sentencing guidelines, publishing guideline judgments and information about sentences imposed by the courts in Scotland.

## Our commitment to BSL

Our British Sign Language Plan sets out how we will contribute to the goals set out in the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2023-29.

The SCTS is committed to promoting accessibility and inclusion for all individuals, including those who use British Sign Language (BSL). This plan outlines our objectives and actions to improve access to justice and court services for BSL users, in alignment with the Scottish Government National Plan 2023-2029.

We recognise the importance of British Sign Language in Scotland and we are committed to ensuring that BSL users are easily able to access our information and services with confidence. This plan has been developed with the help of the BSL community and contributes to the delivery of the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2023-29.

The plan covers the period from 2024-2030 and will be reviewed yearly to ensure it continues to meet the needs of those who use BSL. We commit to continued collaboration with our advisory group members and our colleagues in the public and commercial services union (PCS).

This plan is a key part of a wider programme of work to achieve our equality outcomes:

- The services provided by SCTS are suitable and accessible to all who need to use them.
- SCTS is an inclusive employer with a workforce which proportionately reflects the diversity of Scottish society and where employees have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential.
- SCTS staff are knowledgeable about equality legislation and protected characteristics and treat all court users and colleagues with dignity and respect.

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## The SCTS British Sign Language Plan 2024-2030

The SCTS is aligned to the long-term goals outlined in the BSL National Plan. We have five key areas of focus which contribute to the ambitions of that plan. Our actions in each of our five areas of focus are outlined below.

### 1 BSL accessibility

“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.”

BSL National Plan long-term goal

#### Actions we will take

- Engage with BSL users to agree and take forward a programme of work to increase the accessibility of our website and social media channels.
- Develop BSL videos and resources to provide essential SCTS related information, such as how to navigate the court and tribunal system, legal rights and responsibilities, and available support services.
- Ensure that BSL videos and existing resources are prominently featured on the SCTS website and other relevant platforms, with clear navigation and search functionality.
- Continue to promote the use of Contact Scotland BSL, Scotland’s BSL online interpreting Video Relay Service.
- Train our staff to use and promote the use of BSL both in person and online interpreting video relay services (which allow BSL users to contact public and

third sector services and for these services to contact them), and explore the potential for their greater use.

- Raise awareness of the SCTS being BSL-friendly through internal and external communications channels such as social media, email and marketing materials.
- Increase access to BSL information for visitors to the SCTS buildings and ensure that arrangements for BSL interpreting are highlighted and made more widely known.
- Ensure that SCTS facilities are physically accessible to BSL users, including the provision of appropriate signage, visual alarms, and other accessibility features.
- Always consider the needs and requirements of BSL users in our planning for public engagement meetings and outreach events.
- Offer and encourage participation in BSL awareness training for frontline and engagement staff who work with or who may have contact with BSL users, including judges, and court staff, to enhance their understanding of BSL and communication needs of BSL users.
- Offer advanced training in BSL for those members of staff interested in developing their skills such as BSL level 1.



## 2 Access to employment

“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.”

BSL National Plan long-term goal

### Actions we will take

- Ensure BSL users have equal opportunity to join the SCTS workforce by ensuring that recruiting managers always consider a role and its suitability for BSL users and recruitment campaigns are accessible to BSL users, providing tailored and personalised support to them. Recruiting managers will ensure job opportunities are promoted among the BSL community via key BSL stakeholders/groups.
- Support staff in their respective roles (office and field based) by making reasonable adjustments, providing specialist equipment and the appropriate communication support (i.e. tactile BSL interpreter) when required.
- Continue to attract BSL users to the organisation by exploring opportunities of building and court tours and placements for younger BSL users.

### 3 BSL data

“To strengthen the evidence and data on the BSL community in Scotland to better inform decision making in public policy and service design.”

BSL National Plan long-term goal

#### Action we will take

- Work with our analytical colleagues to map out existing sources of evidence available within our organisations, understand the barriers to evidence gathering and agree on the specific and priority gaps in the current evidence base.

#### 4 Access to justice

“BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland.”

BSL National Plan long-term goal

##### Actions we will take

- Continue our membership of the BSL Justice Advisory Group, with the aim to be abreast of the progress on actions within Justice around BSL and to provide feedback and guidance on SCTS services and policies.
- Explore ways in which BSL support can be accessed more efficiently for our frontline work services.
- Provide clear guidance to SCTS staff on how to request and facilitate BSL interpretation services for BSL users.
- Increase the availability of BSL interpreters for SCTS proceedings by establishing partnerships with qualified BSL interpreting agencies.

## 5 Democratic participation

“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.”

BSL National Plan long-term goal

### Actions we will take

- Conduct regular consultations and engagement activities with BSL users and relevant stakeholders to gather input on their experiences, needs, and priorities related to accessing SCTS services.
- Ensure that BSL Users have equal opportunity to join the SCTS Board and participate as members of the Board through:
  - ensuring that recruitment campaigns for new Board members are accessible to BSL Users; and
  - promoting opportunities among the BSL community via key BSL stakeholders/groups and board members.
- Improve current material about the SCTS available in BSL, with the aim of enhancing understanding of the role of the SCTS, its processes

## Next steps

We will continue to engage with BSL users throughout the plan's implementation and will review the plan annually in order to ensure that BSL users have equal access to justice and court services, empowering them to fully participate in legal proceedings and exercise their rights.

The final version of this document is available in written English and BSL versions on our website. Large font and braille versions are available on request at the contact details below.

Please contact [equality@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:equality@scotcourts.gov.uk) if you would like to be involved in the future.

Tel: 0131 248 2032

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