

# British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

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2025-2031



Scottish Information  
Commissioner

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## Introduction

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### About the Commissioner's office

The Scottish Information Commissioner (the Commissioner) is a public body tasked with promoting and enforcing Freedom of Information law (FOI law) in Scotland, which includes the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Act 2004 (EIRs). Our job is to work with people and Scottish public authorities to enforce rights of access to information under FOI law.

### Language used in this plan

#### BSL

This is an abbreviation for British Sign Language (BSL) which is a language in its own right: it has its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary. For many who use BSL, it is their first language. Where we refer to BSL users in this plan, we mean all people who use BSL as their first, or preferred language and we also mean those who use the tactile form of the language too.

### Background and BSL Plan 2025 – 2031

1. This Plan sets out how the Commissioner will promote the use of BSL in the course of our work. We have aligned our commitments to the key priority areas outlined in the Scottish Government's [BSL National Plan 2023-2031](#) which are most relevant to the Commissioner's remit (and to the extent that these functions are exercisable using BSL) including:
  - BSL Accessibility
  - Access to Employment
  - Democratic Participation
2. The most recent BSL Plan contains a package of commitments and measures which together address ten identified priority areas. Each of the priorities has a mix of short-, mid- and long-term goals that will need to be delivered by public bodies in its six-year life span.
3. Our BSL Plan is framed around these same goals where relevant to the work of the Scottish Information Commissioner, specifically in the area of Scottish public services.
4. We have broken down our strategy for achieving each commitment into short-term, medium-term and long-term actions.
5. We see this plan as a living document and as such, we will publish annual progress updates on our BSL Plan.
6. The British Sign Language version of this Plan is available at [www.foi.scot](http://www.foi.scot). It's on our [Strategic and Operational Plans](#) page.
7. As before, this revised 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 SIC and our services when they so choose, without unnecessary barriers, including language barriers.
8. The Plan is available on BSL on our website at [www.foi.scot](http://www.foi.scot). We always welcome any feedback, including by video message, video relay via [Contact Scotland BSL](#), or email us at [enquiries@foi.scot](mailto:enquiries@foi.scot). Thank you.

## Executive Summary

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9. The Commissioner is committed to ensuring the broad range of statutory functions are accessible to all members of the public. The Commissioner is impartial and independent of the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and other Scottish public authorities. This means the Commissioner cannot be told what the outcome of an appeal must be, but decides it based on the evidence and arguments from both the requester and the authority.
10. The Commissioner's duties include:
  - telling people about their right to see information held by Scottish public authorities;
  - making sure public authorities follow the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004;
  - monitoring freedom of information and encouraging public authorities to have and follow procedures for making their information available to you;
  - making sure public authorities making sure public authorities proactively publish information in the public interest;
  - carrying out appeals when someone is unhappy with the response to an information request.

## Our Commitments

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### BSL Accessibility

11. We support the Scottish Government's long-term goal as set out in the most recent BSL National Plan:

"to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit."
12. Firstly, we share the long-term goal for Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan:

"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, using technology and increasing people's awareness of communication tools."
13. We are also committed to removing barriers for BSL users when accessing, or seeking to access, our services.

### Our actions

#### **Through the lifespan of this plan (long-term), we will:**

- (i) Develop existing links, and explore new ones, with BSL user groups and adopt best practice guidelines. This will include advice on how to involve BSL users in the design and delivery of our services.

For example, we will identify and provide training modules/direct interaction opportunities with BSL communities for our staff to better understand what BSL communities may be dealing with when using FOI law; how can we improve their experiences of FOI/EIRs.

- (ii) Continue to update and improve how we make information about our functions accessible to BSL users, including adding more BSL materials on our website and improving existing video content.
- (iii) Focus on what BSL users want to see on our website in all our workstreams to ensure FOI law is accessible and easy to use for all.
- (iv) Keep improving the accessibility of our website and social media channels, including the exploration of new technologies to assist BSL users
- (v) Continue to promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services 'Contact SCOTLAND BSL', which allows BSL users to contact public and third sector services, and for these services to contact them.
- (vi) Ensure all of the above actions are clearly signposted on our website and that we find more ways to engage with BSL communities so we can make it easy for them to make best use of FOI law in Scotland.

#### **By 2028 (mid-term)**

- (vii) Continue to raise awareness amongst all staff of the needs of BSL users through additional training and induction programmes. This includes creating opportunities for staff who would like to learn BSL.
- (viii) Keep adding and updating the existing systems for the obtaining of BSL / English interpretation and translation services, including interpretation for deaf-blind BSL users.
- (ix) Respond promptly to requests from BSL users to arrange BSL / English interpreting when required for access to our services.
- (x) Reach out to D/deaf and deafblind communities to explore partnership work.

#### **By 2026 (short term)**

- (xi) Set up more refresher training to our staff on how to promote online interpreting video relay services (such as [Contact SCOTLAND BSL](#)) and explore the potential for greater use.
- (xii) Refresh, update and add to the existing BSL versions of key guidance already online, including "Your Right to Know".
- (xiii) Create content and information with accessibility for BSL users considered from the outset.
- (xiv) Increase awareness of and invite applications from BSL users for our External Engagement events in 2025/26 as well as in future years.
- (xv) Build into all our planning the needs and requirements of BSL users for public engagement meetings and outreach events.
- (xvi) Add a dedicated BSL page on the OSIC website – a one-stop shop for BSL users. Design and implement content so that it is always simple to access at a click.

- (xvii) Enhance the sign-posting of BSL content across our website to assist BSL users, and particularly on our Homepage, Your Rights and Contact Us pages.

## Democracy

14. Freedom of information is a key enabler of informed engagement in democratic and public life. To support this, in addition to improving access to our services as set out above, by 2025-2031 (**long-term**) we will:
- (xiv) Continue to work with public authorities subject to the Freedom of Information legislation to consider the needs of BSL users in their Freedom of Information processes.
  - (xv) Attend events held by deaf led organisations to raise awareness of our work
  - (xvi) Consult BSL users during any significant website alterations
  - (xvii) Ensure all significant publications are made available in BSL e.g. updates caused by FOI reform
  - (xviii) Develop our Digital Strategy to incorporate the actions set out above so that we design our systems with the needs of BSL Users in mind.

## What if I want to Comment on the Plan?

We always welcome any questions, comments or ideas about the plan. Please contact us to share these at any time. Here's how to contact us:

You can use the contact Scotland BSL service at [Contact Scotland \(contactscotland-bsl.org\)](https://contactscotland-bsl.org)

This website has a customer service "chat" option using sign video here and there is also free interpreting service via PC, lap-top, tablet or smartphone.



You can also provide your feedback by email to [enquiries@foi.scot](mailto:enquiries@foi.scot) or post – full details at [Contact Us](#)

## How we use your information

The Commissioner can use your feedback and comments to improve and further develop our BSL plan over time.

If you agree to us contacting you, we can use your contact details to keep you informed about changes made to the plan.

When you contact us, we keep your response in accordance with the Commissioner's [privacy policy](#), while keeping your details secure for this purpose until the next BSL plan is published. Thereafter, he will delete your details once they are no longer needed. This includes any transcriptions we hold as a result of your contact via contact Scotland BSL (in keeping with data protection best practice).

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## Contact us

### Scottish Information Commissioner

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KY16 9DS

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

Email: [enquiries@foi.scot](mailto:enquiries@foi.scot)

Web: [www.foi.scot](http://www.foi.scot)

Twitter/ X: [@FOIScotland](https://twitter.com/FOIScotland)

[www.foi.scot](http://www.foi.scot)

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