



NHS Grampian British Sign Language (BSL) Plan

What NHS Grampian wishes to achieve to promote BSL
over the next 2 years

August 2018

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1. Foreword by the Chairman

NHS Grampian has been at the forefront of equality and diversity in healthcare in Scotland since 2005. Many of our local initiatives have been recognised as “Models of Excellence” or “Models of Good Practice” and rolled out in other Health Board and Local Authority areas.

This innovation and leadership also applies to the field of British Sign Language (BSL) provision. The challenge we now face is to maintain the excellent progress we have made to date, while at the same time seeking to further increase service provision. We also have a duty to further increase awareness of BSL and its importance, both within NHS Grampian and the wider community.

The progress we have made to date, has only been made possible by the hard work and commitment of all NHS Grampian staff, the support and close involvement of local BSL users, their representative organisations, partner agencies and other interested parties. I am confident that with their continued support, further progress will be achieved, to the benefit of local BSL users, who we serve.

Professor Stephen Logan,

Chair,

NHS Grampian

May 2018

2. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 17th September 2015 and received Royal Assent on 22nd October 2015.

The Act:

- Requires Scottish Ministers to facilitate the promotion of, the use and understanding of the language known as British sign Language
- “(2) In furtherance of that duty, the Scottish Ministers are to prepare, lay before the Scottish Parliament and publish national plans in relation to British Sign Language in accordance with this section (such a plan being in the Act referred to as a “National Plan”)”
- Requires Scottish Ministers: “(b) to set out what the Scottish Ministers consider that relevant public authorities (see section 7) should or could do to promote, and facilitate the promotion of, the use and understanding of British Sign Language within their areas of responsibility.”

As a result of this latter requirement public bodies in Scotland such as NHS Grampian are required to prepare and publish a BSL Plan which:

- Sets out measures to facilitate the promotion and understanding of BSL
- Sets out timescales for this work
- “contain such other information (if any) at the Scottish Ministers may by order require.”
- Must be as consistent as possible with the most recently published National Plan
- Must first be published in draft format and consulted upon
- When in draft, ensures that those persons likely to be directly affected by the Draft Plan are consulted, namely BSL users and their representative organisations
- When consulted upon, the consultation must be carried out in a way that is accessible to BSL users and people who are deafblind.
- Takes into account representations arising from the consultation

The Scottish Government published the National BSL Plan on the 24th October 2017. Public bodies are required to have in place their own BSL Plan within 12 months of the date of publication of the National Plan. Local BSL Plans should be consistent with the National Plan.

This is the NHS Grampian BSL Plan.

NHS Grampian has also been fortunate to have had the opportunity to discuss the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 with Mark McDonald MSP, who had a major role in the creation of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. His insights have been extremely helpful in helping to shape this document.

3. Consultation Event on 12th April 2018

NHS Grampian decided that rather than publish a Consultation Draft Plan then consult upon it, it would be better to consult local BSL users first, then produce a Draft Consultation Plan for wider consultation.

A consultation event was held 12th April 2018, the primary purpose of the event was to give BSL users the opportunity to try out the new Video BSL service in a non-clinical setting. The opportunity was also take to in-gather views on the provision of BSL services by NHS Grampian generally. Sixteen BSL users attended, one of who was also partially sighted. Other representatives were also present.

The Event was facilitated by one “face to face” BSL interpreter from North East Sensory Services and numerous Video BSL interpreters over a 2 hour period. North East Sensory services also had other representation and we were joined by Mr Tom Mason MSP and Aberdeen City Councillor.

The views of the participants were used to inform the Draft Consultation BSL Plan.

4. Feedback on the Consultation BSL Draft Plan

The NHS Grampian Consultation BSL Draft Plan was issued on Monday 21st May 2018 for a six week consultation period. It was posted on the NHS Grampian website and widely distributed to partner organisations.

All feedback on the Consultation Draft was given full and careful consideration. The Feedback was generally positive, but most responses focussed on the introduction of Video BSL to run alongside our “face to face” BSL service.

A number of themes emerged. These were:

- Respondents expressed the strong view that all of the excellent current NHS Grampian BSL work should continue.
- The current provision of comprehensive expert BSL interpretation for patients and their relatives when accessing healthcare was greatly appreciated.
- The ongoing BSL and other sensory awareness training for staff was warmly welcomed.

Comments on the introduction of Video BSL

The text in the consultation draft stated:

- “Video BSL is a new service introduced by NHS Grampian in February 2018 to make BSL more widely available. It runs alongside “face to face” BSL services, it does not replace them. Video BSL is useful for short routine appointments, while using our local “face to face” interpreters for more complex appointments.”

However, a number of respondents to the Consultation expressed concern that apparently NHS Grampian was seeking to:

“...replace face- to- face BSL translators with ones on a video link.”

This has **never** been an option and perhaps highlights the problems and misunderstandings which can occur when any organisation introduces new technology.

It is hoped that further BSL Consultation Events will help to give our local BSL users further reassurance and allay any concerns.

In contrast, a number of respondents who had already used Video BSL pointed out that it gave them:

- Anonymity when accessing sensitive healthcare
- The option of a male or female interpreter

Also, from a healthcare perspective, having access to expert Video BSL interpretation available in 4 minutes in unplanned care situations was seen as especially valuable.

5. BSL initiatives already in place

NHS Grampian has been extremely proactive in the BSL field for many years. Below is a resume of our current work:

a) Provision of “face to face” BSL interpretation

Whenever healthcare is provided, it is vital that we have in place effective two way communication. For patients with a sensory impairment, communication poses specific challenges which we work hard to overcome.

NHS Grampian makes extensive use of the four freelance qualified BSL interpreters in Grampian. All four have individual Service Level Agreements with NHS Grampian. A fifth BSL interpreter can be accessed through their employer North East Sensory Services.

The provision of professional BSL interpretation for members of our local deaf community when they access healthcare is common sense. This provision can also be deemed a legal requirement under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Act (Specific duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 as amended, the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and other relevant legislation.

Each year for the last 10 years, expenditure on “face to face” BSL interpretation has increased. In 2017/18 this expenditure was over £50,000. This trend will continue.

b) Sensory awareness training as part of our Equality and Diversity Seminars

Equality and Diversity Seminars are an important part of our sensory awareness work. During 2017/18, over 2,000 NHS Grampian staff received “face to face” Equality and Diversity Training at a level appropriate to their role in the organisation.

Each Seminar covers all 9 “protected characteristics” in detail. In addition, all Seminar participants receive their own personal copies of:

- The Seminar presentation
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The NHS Grampian “Religions and Cultures in Grampian booklet”
- The NHS Grampian Guide for Staff to help them Meet the Needs of Transsexual Patients Attending for Hospital Care
- **The NHS Education for Scotland “Z” Card entitled: “Sensory Impairment, Points for Good communication”.**
- The Police Scotland leaflet: “Human Trafficking, Reading the Signs”.

The topic of sensory impairment is covered in detail. It is stressed that staff must be sensitive to the needs of patients, their relatives, carers and co-workers in the healthcare environment who might have a sensory impairment. The content of the NHS Education for Scotland “Z” Card: “Sensory Impairment, Points for Good communication” is covered in detail and a number of anonymised practical examples are discussed.

c) Annual Introduction to BSL Courses

NHS Grampian provides dedicated in-house BSL training for staff. Annual Introduction to BSL Courses are held one evening per week over 12 weeks and give staff a good knowledge of basic BSL and deaf awareness. Staff attend in their own time. There are usually 8-12 participants per Course. Two members of the Deaf community act as volunteer tutors and help the Equality and Diversity Assistant, who also runs the Courses in her own time.

This training is insufficient for clinical use, but it is a valuable tool for reception and other staff and enables them to greet deaf patients and help them feel at ease in the healthcare environment.

d) “Dedicated” Sensory Impairment Seminars

NHS Grampian also provides a number of “dedicated” sensory impairment seminars for departments, upon request. These include:

- Deaf Awareness
- Visual Impairment Awareness
- Sighted Guiding

If available, volunteers with a sensory impairment, also participate in these Seminars.

e) Sensory Impairment Awareness Week for Staff

Since 2012, NHS Grampian has held an annual Sensory Impairment Awareness Week. These involve local sensory impairment groups and organisations such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, North East Sensory Services, Aberdeen Action on Disability and Hearing Dogs. Events include, Seminars, drop in sessions, demonstrations of equipment, and literature displays in different areas of NHS Grampian.

Staff attendance levels have been excellent and the activities often lead to further requests from departments for more Seminars, which are then arranged.

The drop in sessions run jointly with Guide Dogs for the Blind and Hearing Dogs, have proved especially popular with University of Aberdeen students.

e) Resources on the intranet

There are a range of sensory impairment resources on the intranet available for staff.

6. Patients who are DeafBlind

One of the four freelance BSL interpreters in Grampian is also trained in DeafBlind communication. If more specialised support is required, this can be accessed through DeafBlind Scotland, who are based in Lenzie near Glasgow.

Requests for Deafblind communication are infrequent.

7. Future initiatives

The participants at the event on the 12th April 2018 were invited to provide feedback on NHS Grampian services for BSL users. This feedback also came through questionnaires which a number of participants completed.

The feedback showed that overall; satisfaction levels with NHS Grampian BSL provision to support patients, visitors and carers were extremely high. This positive feedback reflects the hard work and substantial resources NHS Grampian has committed to BSL over many years. Much of this progress would have been possible without the active engagement and support of many members of our local BSL community.

Three main themes emerged from the feedback. These were:

a) Existing initiatives

Participants expressed the strong view that all of the current NHS Grampian BSL work should continue.

b) Video BSL

Video BSL is a new service introduced by NHS Grampian in February 2018 to make BSL more widely available. It runs alongside “face to face” BSL services, it does not replace them. Video BSL is useful for short routine appointments, while using our local “face to face” interpreters for more complex appointments.

A number of patients who have already used BSL pointed out that it gave them:

- Anonymity when accessing sensitive healthcare
- The option of a male or female interpreter

Video BSL is being rolled out over the next 2 years to:

- Accident and Emergency Departments
- Clinical Departments who regularly have BSL users attending

Having BSL interpretation available in 4 minutes in unplanned care situations is seen as especially valuable.

Video BSL is new technology which has caused some BSL users apprehension, hence the holding of the consultation event when BSL users could try out Video BSL in a non-clinical setting. Further events are planned.

It is freely acknowledged that Video BSL is not appropriate for all situations or all patients. At the consultation event, a number of patients sought reassurance that Video BSL would not replace “face to face” BSL, This assurance was given. A number of BSL users were also quick to appreciate the benefits of Video BSL in the provision of unplanned care.

We will be happy to provide training, support and advice to our colleagues in the three Health and Social Care Partnerships in Grampian, should they wish to introduce Video BSL for their services.

c) BSL Video Clips on the NHS Grampian Website

A number of BSL users inquired if it would be possible to put some healthcare information on the NHS Grampian website in the form of video BSL clips.

At present, the NHS Grampian website is near to capacity. It is hoped that a new bigger website platform will be introduced later this year. The new platform will give us the capacity to put some regularly requested information on the website as BSL video clips.

BSL users will be consulted on the types of information they would find useful. It is also hoped to create links to the websites of partner agencies where further BSL video clips will be available.

d) Other initiatives

It is possible that additional suggestions for future BSL work will be received when the finalised BSL Plan is published. All further suggestions will be given the fullest consideration.

8. Formal approval

The finalised NHS Grampian BSL Plan was formally approved at the NHS Grampian Engagement and Participation Committee Meeting on Wednesday 22nd August 2018.

Report collated by Nigel Firth, Equality and Diversity Manager on behalf of the NHS Grampian Disability Discrimination Act Review Group

27th July 2018