

BSL (Scotland) Act 2015

Scottish NHS Boards and NHS 24: Summary of Progress being made with BSL Plans

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I. Background

Based on the data from the 2011 Scottish Census, around 12,500 people in Scotland (0.24 per cent of the population aged 3 years and over, or 24 per 10,000 people) use British Sign Language (BSL) at home.¹

On 17th September 2015, the Scottish Parliament passed the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill 2015. On 21st October 2015, the Bill was enacted by Royal Assent to become the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. The Act placed a responsibility on listed public bodies to set out how they will promote the use and understanding of British Sign Language (BSL).²

In the summer of 2017, the Scottish Government launched a BSL National Plan which outlines 70 action points with 10 goals, including health, mental health, and wellbeing. The BSL National Plan is expected to be reviewed every 6 years.³

Other listed public bodies are required to create BSL Authority Plans, which are to take due regard of the BSL National Plan. This includes Local Authorities, NHS Boards, Colleges and Universities across Scotland. The majority published their first Authority Plans in 2018.⁴

The Scottish Government funds BDA Scotland to support the public sector with implementing their work in relation to BSL. BDA Scotland employed an Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer in February 2020 to engage with 14 Scottish NHS Boards and other health bodies such as NHS 24, as well as non-departmental public bodies (NDPB) and political parties, for a period of 18 months.

As part of the engagement with 14 NHS Boards and NHS 24, the Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer collated information about the progress of the majority of individual NHS Boards' BSL local plans as part of the planned review by the Scottish Government in October 2021. This report summarises the information collated for the Scottish Government's progress report.

¹ The reference can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/analysis-equality-results-2011-census-part-2/pages/6/>

² The (BSL Scotland) Act 2015 legislation can be found at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/11/pdfs/asp_20150011_en.pdf

³ For reference, a copy of The National Plan can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/british-sign-language-bsl-national-plan-2017-2023/>

⁴ For reference, copies of these local Plans can be found in the NHS Boards section at: <http://bslscotlandact2015.scot/plans/>

2. Purpose

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 states that a BSL National Plan Progress Report is to be submitted before the Scottish Parliament by October 2020 to review progress on the 70 actions in the BSL National Plan. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shifting of priorities for both the Scottish Government and the NHS Boards, the expected submission of the Progress Report has been moved back to October 2021.

In order to collate information from the 14 NHS Boards and NHS 24 to submit to the Scottish Government for consideration in the BSL National Progress Report, the Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer created a questionnaire which focussed mainly on those National Plan Actions which focus on health, mental health and wellbeing (actions 39 to 49), plus any additional actions from other sections where appropriate.

The Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer interviewed the equality and diversity leads of each NHS Board, as they are mainly responsible for the implementation of the actions stated in their individual BSL local plans. Interviews have been summarised for this report.

This report is an updated version of the interim report that was published in October 2020, with the intention of supporting the Scottish Government and relevant public bodies in identifying good practices and challenges in advance of the BSL Progress Report, due in October 2021. It is hoped the information in this report will assist NHS Boards to progress their individual BSL local plans and engage with their local BSL communities. BDA Scotland also present this report in the hope of encouraging collaboration between the NHS Boards and relevant public bodies in working together to share ideas and tackle common challenges, in order to make progress towards a common goal.

3. Methodology

The questionnaire consisted of six questions. The first five questions were developed around the key themes identified in the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015⁵:

1. Progress of the BSL Local Plan

- a. Do you feel that your NHS Board has made some contribution to the action points under the BSL National Plan (under Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) numbers 39 to 49 and are you on track?
- b. Do you feel that your BSL Local Plan is progressing and on track?

2. Deaf Community

- a. What work have you progressed with the Deaf community?
- b. Can you share any achievements and examples of good practice that your NHS Board are seeing in relation to BSL over the last three years?
- c. Do you feel you have been able to engage effectively with the Deaf community to empower them to use your complaint procedures? Are they accessible to Deaf BSL users?
- d. Has there been any feedback from BSL users?
- e. What changes/impacts have you achieved for the Deaf community?

3. Challenges and Gaps

- a. What challenges did you face in your work in informing and promoting your BSL Plan?
- b. Have you identified any new gaps since your BSL plan was published?

4. Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) and Other NHS Boards

- a. Did you work with other NHS Boards or at HSCP level to achieve action points in your BSL local plan?
 - i) If yes, what work has been done?
 - ii) If not, why has this not happened?
- b. Did the partnership(s) work effectively, to benefit the Deaf community?
- c. What gaps/challenges would you identify in working with other NHS Boards, HSCPs and/or other external services?

5. Future Actions and Plans

- a. What further work is required to achieve the aims set out in your BSL Local Plan?
- b. Do you have any future plans to engage with the Deaf community?

6. BDA Scotland

- a. Do you feel you have a good understanding of BDA Scotland's role and work?
- b. What support would you like from BDA Scotland, and to what extent?

The Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer conducted the interviews between March 2020 and August 2021.

⁵ For reference, see p.11 of the (BSL Scotland) Act 2015 legislation: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/11/pdfs/asp_20150011_en.pdf

In March 2020, the Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer met with equality leads from 2 NHS Boards physically before the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that any further meetings in person were not possible. Meetings with other equality leads were then arranged virtually using Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

The purpose of engaging directly, rather than communicating via email was to establish a rapport with the equality leads and to develop a working relationship where BDA Scotland could support each NHS Board in future engagement in relation to BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

By August 2021, 18 interviews had been conducted, covering 13 (93%) of the NHS Boards and NHS 24. Thirty-two members of NHS staff participated in these interviews. One Equality Lead interviewed was responsible for 3 NHS Boards' work in relation to BSL (Scotland) Act 2015; therefore, the interview covered all 3 NHS Boards.

The interim report was published in October 2020; the Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer then re-engaged with the NHS Boards between March 2021 – August 2021 to update the information previously supplied, ahead of the Progress Report due in October 2021.

The Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer noted that the BSL Plans for the following NHS boards are shared with relevant local authorities: NHS Ayrshire and Arran, NHS Dumfries and Galloway, NHS Fife, NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Shetland. Information might therefore overlap with other reports.⁶ NHS Borders have not published their BSL Local Plan.

NHS Board	NHS Staff:	Date:	NHS Board	NHS Staff:	Date:
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde	2	10 March 2020	NHS 24	2	1 July 2020
	1	30 March 2021		2	6 April 2021
NHS Forth Valley	2	16 March 2020	NHS Highland	2	2 July 2020
	2	9 April 2021		2	11 June 2021
NHS Lothian	1	27 April 2020	NHS Dumfries & Galloway	1	24 July 2020
NHS Grampian, NHS Orkney and NHS Shetland	1	11 June 2020		4	20 July 2021
NHS Ayrshire and Arran	1	15 June 2020	NHS Eileanan Siar/ Western Isles	1	15 Sept 2020
	1	13 April 2021	NHS Lanarkshire	1	23 Nov 2020
NHS Fife	1	29 June 2020		1	12 July 2021
		21 July 2021 (joint response with Fife Council)	NHS Tayside	4	23 Aug 2021

NOTE: Where second dates are provided, these are update interviews conducted after the original meetings carried out for the October 2020 interim report.

⁶ For reference, all the shared plans can be found at: <http://bslscotlandact2015.scot/plans/>

4. Overview

This overview will summarise the information supplied by the **13 (93%)** NHS Boards and NHS 24, under the appropriate elements of each aforementioned question. **The updates from the NHS Boards and NHS 24 are included in bold.**

I. Progress of the BSL Local Plan

- a. Do you feel that your NHS Board has made some contribution to the action points under the BSL National Plan (under Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) numbers 39 to 49 and are you on track?
- b. Do you feel that your BSL Local Plan is progressing and on track?

The main aspect of this question focuses on the Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing (Actions 39 – 49) section of the BSL National Plan which states: “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.”

Action 39: “Publish a schedule for making all screening and immunisation information accessible in BSL. NHS Scotland will produce information in BSL to support Bowel, Breast and Cervical screening programmes. NHS Scotland will produce information in BSL to support Childhood and Seasonal Flu immunisation programmes. This information will be easy to find on the ‘NHS Inform’ website.”

Actions by the NHS Boards:

- NHS 24 manages the NHS Inform website⁷ where there is a BSL-specific general information page containing all screening and immunisation information in BSL. NHS 24 also has a YouTube channel⁸ where BSL videos are stored and can be viewed directly. The information here is appropriate for Scotland-wide access.

NHS 24 and Public Health Scotland plan to update their information, and BSL translations will be produced and added to the NHS Inform website at the same time as the written English versions in 2021.

- **Thirteen (93%)** of the NHS Boards stated that they regularly signpost local Deaf BSL users to the NHS Inform website for BSL information about screening and immunisation programmes.
- **Four (29%)** of the NHS Boards who responded said they have created some BSL videos and other resources to refer to their local services, and that they had shared these with their networks. The BSL videos were created after these boards received some feedback from local BSL users.
- **Four (29%)** of the NHS Boards manage their own BSL-focussed social media platforms, which they use to engage with local Deaf BSL users and to share relevant information. The other NHS Boards who responded used either their own general Facebook page/group or worked with a partner public body who manage their BSL-focussed social media platforms.⁹

⁷ For reference, the BSL-specific NHS Inform webpage can be found at: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/translations/languages/british-sign-language-bsl>

⁸ For reference, the YouTube channel can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/nhsinform>

⁹ The links to the social media platforms can be found in the appendix C at the end of this report.

- NHS Highland reported that their staff are able to access their local online health resources library where there are copies of leaflets with links to BSL information and resources, along with links to the NHS Inform website.

Action 40: *“Increase the availability of accurate and relevant health and social care information in BSL and will work with BSL users to determine where this information should be located. NHS Health Scotland and NHS 24 will deliver this work in partnership and will review progress in 2019 and every two years thereafter.”*

- NHSGGC and NHS Lothian have internal staff working on creating health information videos in BSL for the Deaf BSL community. NHS Grampian regularly uses local Deaf BSL users and BSL/English interpreters to translate health information in BSL. The other NHS Boards have contracts with external agencies to create health information in BSL videos to share locally with Deaf BSL users. Once these videos have been produced, these are promoted within local networks through their websites and social media platforms. **NHSGGC is currently advertising for a BSL Patient Information Officer; the post is expected to begin in Autumn 2021.**
- **Five (36%)** of the NHS Boards reported that they regularly engaged with members of the local Deaf BSL community via various methods to ask them what health information they wanted to see in BSL. Some of this engagement was done by meeting members of local Deaf clubs and centres and through weekly walk-in sessions as well as through their own WhatsApp and Facebook groups. NHSGGC established a BSL Health Champion forum with participating Deaf BSL users taking on the role of engaging with the local Deaf BSL community to share health information through both visits to the Deaf clubs/centres and via their own Facebook groups.
- **Three (21%)** of the NHS Boards reported that their websites were out of date and once they had upgraded to a new website platform, they planned to add new BSL videos. For most of these NHS Boards, the upgrade had been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- NHS 24 reported that since their BSL general information webpage was created it has been visited 11,000 times and the YouTube BSL videos have been viewed a total of 16,000 times. NHS 24 mentioned that BSL is the second most popular choice of language (after English) on the NHS Inform website in terms of numbers of webpage visits.
- **NHS 24 continues to work with Public Health Scotland and Scottish Government on updating any COVID-19 related information and getting the information translated in BSL. This work is ongoing. NHS 24 have a contract with NHS Lothian to create BSL translations of the health information being shared on the NHS Inform website, which includes the COVID-19 information.¹⁰**

¹⁰ The COVID-19 BSL page can be found at: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/translations/languages/british-sign-language-bsl/illnesses-and-conditions/coronavirus-covid-19-bsl>

- NHSGGC produced guidelines to help staff to understand what an appropriate use of Interpreter Now and contactSCOTLAND-BSL apps would be in terms of providing BSL/English interpreting support. NHSGGC made it clear in the guidelines that Deaf BSL users have the right to have face-to-face interpreting support if that is their preferred choice.
- NHS Forth Valley identified gaps in older Deaf BSL users' access to technology, so they supported Forth Valley Sensory Centre in their funding application for iPads to be provided to Deaf BSL users who would need to access health information online. However, there is additionally a gap in training people how to use the iPads and how to navigate health websites and social media platforms. NHS Forth Valley will look into this further, post COVID-19 recovery.

Action 4I: *“Work with local authorities, providers and service users to improve the way that adult social care is delivered, including how residential care is commissioned and how care and support is delivered to people at home. The voices and experiences of service users, including BSL users will be at the centre of these reforms and will shape planning and implementation and improve outcomes.”*

- **Five (36%)** of the NHS Boards visited hospital wards and GP surgeries to check that each ward/GP surgery had the resources required to meet Deaf BSL users' needs and whether staff knew how to meet these needs e.g., how to book BSL/English interpreters.
- **Six (43%)** of the NHS Boards worked with both Video Relay Service (VRS) and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) service providers to train both their staff and members of the Deaf BSL community in how to use both VRS and VRI services to communicate. However, there remains some confusion about the difference between the VRS and VRI.

[VRS is when no-one is in the same room; all the communication is done remotely. When a Deaf BSL user needs to make a phone call, they use the VRS to communicate in BSL via an online BSL/English interpreter. In Scotland, the main VRS service is called contactSCOTLAND-BSL and is funded by the Scottish Government.

VRI is when a Deaf BSL user is in the same room as a professional such as a doctor or a nurse, and they communicate by connecting to an online BSL/English interpreter via a smartphone or a tablet. VRI services are supplied to various NHS Boards by a number of different providers.]

- NHS Fife also arranged for BSL/English interpreters to visit hospital wards and meet with ward staff in their break times to discuss how to meet the communication needs of Deaf BSL-using patients and how BSL/English interpreting works during hospital ward consultations. Staff were also able to learn basic communication tips from the interpreters.
- **NHS 24 received a video from a Deaf BSL user who provided feedback about access to the NHS Inform website. NHS 24's Digital Engagement team sent their**

response in BSL, engaging a BSL presenter to help them with this and adding subtitles to the video too. This is an example of good practice because the whole communication process is in the preferred language of the Deaf BSL user.

- In addition to the above, NHS Tayside stated that they have got the in-house BSL/English interpreters on standby to translate in case a Deaf BSL user sends in a BSL video to either make a complaint or feedback. They could also then respond in BSL.
- Three (21%) of the NHS Boards reported that they received feedback from Deaf BSL users through the COVID-19 pandemic and that they acted accordingly to provide solutions such as ensuring that face-to-face BSL/English interpreting support is provided at a scheduled appointment and that a BSL video was created for localised information.

Action 42: *“Take forward the work to extend free personal care to everyone who requires it, regardless of age, taking account of the views and needs of BSL users.”*

- **Five (36%)** of the NHS Boards said they are working in partnership with local authorities and local Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) to ensure BSL access to relevant health information, shared through visits to Deaf clubs/centres and by producing BSL videos to be shared through social media platforms.
- **As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions were placed on physical visits. After feedback from Deaf BSL-using patients, NHS GGC provided 300 iPads across their local hospitals such as Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, so that patients could communicate with their loved ones virtually. The contactSCOTLAND-BSL app was installed in all 300 iPads so Deaf BSL users could also use them to access appointments.**
- **As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS services across Scotland suspended all physical appointments, which led to the roll out of the Near Me video appointments service. BSL/English interpreters can be integrated into this for Deaf BSL users’ online appointments. The feedback from the Deaf BSL users about the Near Me service was positive overall; one commented that the service was “fantastic and very helpful with appointments at home”; another, however, felt that their access “was not good because the screen keeps freezing.” The service is a good initiative and offers a solution for many Deaf BSL users who may not be able to access an appointment physically, though some teething problems remain.**

Action 43¹¹: *“Develop a learning resource for health and social care staff to raise awareness of BSL and Deaf culture. This will be led by NHS Health Scotland and will be rolled out across Scotland by 2018.”*

¹¹ The information for Action 43 is also relative to Action 06 of the BSL National Plan which states that: “Encourage public bodies to access BSL awareness training for staff who may work with BSL users, and signpost to appropriate training.”

- **Thirteen (93%)** NHS Boards reported that they have each got an e-learning portal for their staff to access relevant training programmes online. The online training includes information about BSL/Tactile BSL access and how to communicate with Deaf BSL and Deafblind BSL users. One Board reported that their funding for the training has been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Thirteen (93%)** NHS Boards also reported that they had organised physical BSL and Tactile BSL awareness training sessions too, provided by either an internal staff member or an external trainer (these took place before the COVID-19 pandemic put physical training sessions on hold).
- **Five (36%)** of the NHS Boards also worked in partnership with other organisations such as local authorities to provide BSL awareness training for both NHS staff and staff from other organisations, both physically and virtually.
- **Two (14%)** of the NHS Boards reported that there was some interest among their staff in learning BSL because people would like to communicate with Deaf BSL users directly. **Three (21%)** of the NHS Boards provided some “Introduction to BSL” courses to their staff as a result of this feedback.
- **NHSGGC reported that 50,000 NHS staff have used their e-learning portal to access Equality and Diversity training, which was added to the list of mandatory training and induction training in 2020. Equality and Diversity training includes information about how to communicate with Deaf BSL users. However, NHSGGC is currently looking at creating a tailored e-learning training session that focuses on Deaf BSL users’ needs and covers other relevant information about BSL.**
- **NHS Forth Valley’s plans to register with the SQA for provision of BSL introduction and BSL Level one stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They plan to resume engagement with SQA as part of their action plan for 2021. NHS Forth Valley is currently waiting on SQA to visit and assess the venue for the training, which is the third and final stage of the assessment. They had completed Stage 2 of the SQA assessment, creating policies and procedures, and were waiting for the assessments to be signed off when the pandemic caused the hold-up. NHS Forth Valley have a Deaf BSL teacher lined up to co-work with a member of staff to provide the training once Stage 3 of the SQA assessment has been completed and the registration has been verified.**
- **NHS Ayrshire and Arran is currently working with council partners on funding for the SQA Level 1 and 2 qualifications when the COVID-19 restrictions end. The first goal is to offer introductory BSL Level to frontline staff who may engage with Deaf BSL users, so they learn some basic communication relevant to their work, such as, “How can I help you?” and, “Ok, sit down there, we will fetch you when ready.”**
- **NHS Tayside also created a guide for their staff on how to book BSL/English interpreters. They shared this through the training hub, on the staff intranet and via the staff newsletter.**

Action 44: *“We will agree how to improve individual patient health records so that they clearly show when the first or preferred language is BSL and a BSL/English interpreter is needed. NHS services can then be notified in advance of any appointments.”*

- There was wide variation among the NHS Boards around how Deaf patients' communication needs are flagged up on patient record systems:
 - a) NHS Dumfries and Galloway reported that they have a universal system they use for flagging up the need for BSL/English interpreting support for Deaf BSL using patients. However, they identified that their system did not function effectively for real-time situations such as a trip to A&E or a walk-in clinic. They recognise that they to deal with this issue.
 - b) NHS Grampian have a system which flags up the need for BSL/English interpreters for out-patient appointments. However, in in-patient situations, the ward staff are instructed to liaise with the patient to see whether they require a BSL/English interpreter. They reported that in the first instance, staff would go to the VRI service.
 - c) NHS Lothian plans to establish two flagging-up and tracking systems in the near future, one for Primary Care and one for Secondary Care. However, they've identified an issue for any patient transferring from Primary to Secondary Care because patients' extended data is not shared across. The patient would need to contact Secondary Care services personally to ensure that their need for BSL/English interpreting support is included in the Secondary Care's tracking system.
 - d) NHS Fife have a tracking system that frontline staff from both the Primary and Secondary Care services can access. Once a GP or other medical professional flags up a Deaf BSL-using patient's need for BSL/English interpreting support, all their facilities should be able to see that they need to organise a BSL/English interpreter for an appointment. However, Deaf BSL users regularly contact the Communication Service to double check who has been booked to interpret for their appointments.
 - e) NHS Forth Valley reported that after they switched to the Microsoft Office 365 Tracking Care system, they endeavoured to have BSL included in the languages options so health professionals could record which patients require BSL/English interpreters. The Tracking Care System is regularly updated to ensure that all data is up-to-date and accurate, meaning Deaf patients on the system should be automatically flagged.
 - f) **NHS Tayside use the Track Care system which provides a two-way alert system for all NHS facilities. Once a patient is registered, they are given a CHI number, and information such requiring a BSL/English interpreter can be recorded. This will then be flagged up when appointments are made in the other departments. Any new information would also be flagged up once recorded, such as preferences for particular BSL/English interpreters.**
- As it currently stands, there is no indication whether there is any cross-boundary flagging system in place for situations where a Deaf BSL user from one area needs to attend an

appointment in a different area for a specific purpose. Currently, that person would need to contact the NHS Board directly to arrange for a BSL/English interpreter.

Action 45: *“Ensure that – in line with Scotland’s Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 – BSL users should get the right help at the right time, expect recovery, and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma.”*

- There were a variety of ways in which the NHS Boards dealt with Deaf BSL users’ need for mental health support:
 - a) **Five (36%)** of the NHS Boards have their own mental health practitioner support, with BSL/English interpreting support if required. However, **2 (14%)** of the NHS Boards reported that they have previously referred some Deaf BSL users to NHS Lothian’s Deaf Mental Health Service.
 - b) NHSGGC established a BSL counselling service in partnership with an external service provider in March 2019. In March 2021, NHSGGC confirmed that this has now becomes a permanent service for Deaf BSL users in Glasgow.
 - c) NHS Fife stated that they run a “Mood Café” website where mental health practitioners facilitate some psychological support including counselling for people who need it, and supply information and resources online for people from a wide range of backgrounds such as parents, young people and carers.¹²
 - d) NHS Highland mentioned that they have an arrangement with an external service who sends a specialist mental health practitioner for Deaf BSL to their boundary once a month. They do not have their own bespoke mental health support for Deaf BSL users.
 - e) **NHS 24 is currently working with Public Health Scotland to create information videos in BSL relating to the most common mental health and wellbeing issues, such as how to deal with panic attacks and ‘10 ways to fight your fears’. Sixteen BSL videos have now been uploaded to the NHS Inform website with subtitles included.¹³**
 - f) **NHS 24 will focus on creating information relating to mental health and wellbeing post-COVID-19, for the rest of 2021, as Scotland prepares for the lifting of restrictions from summer onwards.**
 - g) **NHS 24 will work on Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) for the upcoming Mental Health Hub which NHS 24 expect to be a 24/7 service. The assessments will include the requirement that staff meet the needs of Deaf BSL users and to clarify what arrangements will be in place for the staff to communicate with Deaf BSL users.**
 - h) **NHS 24 will work in partnership with contactSCOTLAND-BSL to ensure that the BSL/English interpreters who work on the VRS service are aware of the Mental Health Hub and are trained to appropriately interpret Deaf people’s engagements with the Hub.**

¹² The website can be found at: <https://www.moodcafe.co.uk/>

¹³ The videos can be found at: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/translations/languages/british-sign-language-bsl>

Action 46: *“Implement a new national Interpretation and Translation Policy which includes BSL provision. This will be led by NHS Health Scotland and will provide guidance to support delivery across all NHS boards by 2018.”*

- **Thirteen (93%)** NHS Boards stated that they participated in the Equality Lead Network group where they worked together on the National Interpretation and Translation Policy which is chaired by Public Health Scotland. The policy was launched in October 2020.¹⁴

Action 47: *“Work with partners to deliver and evaluate two training programmes aimed at supporting BSL/English interpreters to work within the Health sector, with a view to informing a longer-term approach.”*

- **Three (21%)** of the NHS Boards reported that the agencies that they are contracted to for BSL/English interpreting support have got their own policy and guidance relating to the training of BSL/English interpreters.
- **NHS Tayside’s in-house BSL/English interpreters have received two face-to-face training sessions on how to ensure they provide appropriate support in mental health appointments, and they have access to the recordings of these sessions if they wish to revisit the information that they learned.**
- NHS Lothian have a partnership with Heriot-Watt University who currently provide training for BSL/English interpreters. This includes interpreting in medical settings and how to interpret medical jargon. The information for the medical-related training is provided by their Interpreting and Translation team.

Action 49: *“Ensure that the national strategy to address social isolation and loneliness which will be published for consultation in Autumn 2017 will make explicit reference to the experience and needs of BSL users.”*

- **Seven (50%)** of the NHS Boards have contracts with VRI service providers. They have provided iPads with the VRI service app on to hospitals to help tackle the isolation faced by Deaf BSL-using patients while they are in the wards, and for the ward staff to be able to communicate with them.
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran mentioned that they are working with local statutory partners to tackle social loneliness – this work helped to establish a local youth club for Deaf young people. However, for older Deaf people, they are looking at using arts and culture to encourage Deaf BSL users to come out and meet up – events such as attending art galleries, film showings, etc.
- NHS GGC mentioned that they are working with a local HSCP with the aim of providing workshops for the Deaf community on how to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

¹⁴ The policy can be found at: <http://www.healthscotland.scot/publications/interpreting-communication-support-and-translation-national-policy>

- **NHS Tayside have WhatsApp, SMS and FaceTime accounts, which Deaf BSL users can use to contact them if they feel the need. The in-house interpreters can also talk with Deaf BSL users as a step towards reducing loneliness.**

Other Relevant Actions

Action 05: *“Promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service (VRS) called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL¹⁵’, which allows BSL users to contact public and third sector services and for these services to contact them and explore the potential for its greater use.”*

“All my family, except myself, have had COVID-19 symptoms and tested positive. We received advice and support from the NHS 24 helpline through contactSCOTLAND-BSL. If not for this service, we might have gone wrong with isolation dates and medication dosages. It was a life saver for us.” **Deaf BSL user, Renfrewshire**

- **Eight (57%)** of the NHS Boards have promoted the use of contactSCOTLAND-BSL VRS service both externally to their local Deaf BSL community and to others via methods such as including links on their homepage, on their ‘contact us’ webpages and on their email signatures, and internally to their staff via the intranet.
- The contactSCOTLAND-BSL also attended some Deaf clubs and centres, along with representatives from NHS Boards, to demonstrate how to use the service.
- **Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, contactSCOTLAND-BSL provided webinars for members of NHS services to learn about the VRS service.**
- **BDA Scotland holds regular meetings with the team responsible for contactSCOTLAND-BSL to update them and offer feedback.**
- **contactSCOTLAND-BSL regularly supply the latest statistics relating to calls being made through the service.**
- contactSCOTLAND-BSL also provided training to some NHS staff on how to receive calls from Deaf clients using contactSCOTLAND-BSL.
- **Four (29%)** of the NHS Boards also have contracts with Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) service providers to provide communication access for Deaf BSL-using patients if face-to-face BSL/English interpreting provision is not immediately available.
- **Three (21%)** of the NHS Boards have contracts with a different service provider to provide a VRS service as well as a VRI service.

¹⁵ For reference, the contactSCOTLAND-BSL website can be found at: <https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

Action 9: *“Consider what further work is needed to ensure that a strong and skilled pool of BSL/English interpreters are working efficiently across Scotland.”*

- **Two (14%)** of the NHS Boards have an in-house pool of BSL/English interpreters. On occasions where all the in-house interpreters are busy, these Boards have an agreement with an external interpreting agency to supply an interpreter.
- **Five (36%)** of the NHS Boards have contracts with external agencies to provide BSL/English interpreting support when required.
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran found that the limited availability of interpreting support was caused by a high demand for BSL/English interpreters in the Central Belt of Scotland. Deaf BSL using-patients often found that interpreters were not booked for their appointments, which caused frustrations. NHS Ayrshire and Arran are working with the NHS Boards' Equality Leads Network to try to solve this barrier for Deaf patients.
- **Four (29%)** of NHS Boards who are based in Northern Scotland and Islands made the point that because the pool of BSL/English interpreters in the North of Scotland is very limited, there is a reliance on the same few interpreters. Sometimes this leads to inflexibility, where Deaf BSL users have been unwilling to accept a different interpreter if their preferred interpreter is not available. This inflexibility can cause appointments to be postponed. The Northern Scottish NHS Boards are especially concerned because they are aware that despite the fact that there are people in North of Scotland who are interested in becoming BSL/English interpreters, there is no training programme in the North of Scotland. People would have to travel to either to the Central Belt of Scotland or to England to acquire BSL/English interpreting qualifications. Additionally, once people have qualified, there is a higher demand for interpreters in the Central Belt of Scotland and in England which means interpreters may elect to base themselves there once qualified, to increase their earning potential. The Northern Scottish NHS Boards are concerned about the current shortage of BSL/English interpreters in the North of Scotland and would like to see some support from the Scottish Government to increase the pool of interpreters in the North so local people can have more choice.
- Because of the remoteness of the area and the journey times that BSL/English interpreters would face travelling for face-to-face interpreting, NHS Eileanan Siar choose to use a VRI service exclusively for all Deaf BSL users' appointments, instead of face-to-face support.
- **Seven (50%) NHS Boards who provided updated information mentioned that they had arranged BSL/English interpreting support in their local COVID-19 vaccination centres, either physically or virtually via external VRI service providers.**
- **NHS Fife have a partnership with the Deaf Communication Service (run by Fife Council), to provide BSL/English interpreters for Deaf BSL users. The service informs Deaf BSL users which interpreter is booked for their upcoming appointments.**

2. Deaf Community

- a. What work have you progressed with the Deaf community?
 - b. Can you share any achievements and examples of good practice that your NHS Board are seeing in relation to BSL over the last three years?
 - c. Do you feel you have been able to engage effectively with the Deaf community to empower them to use the complaint procedures? Are they accessible for Deaf BSL users?
 - d. Has there been any feedback from BSL users?
 - e. What changes/impacts have you achieved for the Deaf community?
- **Seven (50%)** of the NHS Boards reported that they have had direct engagement with Deaf BSL users through local Deaf clubs and centres and have been able to signpost members to the information they required. They were also able to collect feedback from Deaf BSL users about their services and other health-related issues in relation to BSL access. At least one NHS Board has established an internal working group who engage directly with their local Deaf BSL community.
 - NHS 24 met with Deaf BSL users when they visited several Deaf clubs, such as the Golden Amber Club and Edinburgh Deaf Sports and Social Club to collect feedback about the NHS Inform website. They found that the members were not sure how to access the website and that they struggled to navigate the technology. NHS 24 were able to demonstrate how to access the webpage in their subsequent visits and provided pens with the web address on to distribute to Deaf community members.
 - NHS 24 and **3 (21%)** NHS Boards employed Deaf BSL users with the support of the Access to Work scheme.¹⁶ They also recruited Deaf BSL-using volunteers to engage with the Deaf BSL community and to work along with their local NHS Board on the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015-related work and on the BSL local plans.
 - **Three (21%)** of the NHS Boards linked up with other bodies and VRS and VRI service providers to engage with Deaf BSL users and help them to understand how to access services as well as how to use VRS and VRI services.
 - NHS Fife (in partnership with a local authority) have set up a BSL action plan focus group with 5 Deaf BSL users and a Deafblind BSL user participating. The group meet to discuss topics such as the pros and cons of face-to-face and virtual interpreting, access to health services for Deaf BSL users and to provide feedback about BSL-related issues.
 - **For some NHS Boards, direct engagement with the Deaf community stalled during the pandemic. Sharing BSL videos via social media/email was the only form of engagement during this time. All the NHS Boards who responded to the update request stated their commitment to resume direct engagement from Autumn 2021 onwards. BDA Scotland suggested that they could set up engagement events**

¹⁶ This is relevant to the Action 35 of the BSL National Plan which states: "Raise awareness of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme with employers and representative organisations and with BSL users* themselves, so that BSL users* who are employed, (including those who are undertaking a Modern Apprenticeship) can benefit from the support it provides."

through Zoom, as well as resuming face-to-face engagements once it is safe to visit Deaf clubs again.

- NHS 24 plan to host engagement events in September 2021 to collect information from the Deaf community about NHS 24 services, which includes the 111 services and the NHS Inform website.
- Thirteen (93%) of the NHS Boards shared the updates from BDA Scotland with their contacts from the Deaf community.

3. Challenges and Gaps

- a. What challenges did you face in your work in informing and promoting your BSL Plan?
- b. Have you identified any new gaps since your BSL plan was published?

- One of the gaps identified by NHS Boards is the lack of opportunity for a two-way dialogue when Deaf BSL users view health information in BSL online. There was also concern that older Deaf people who may not have social media accounts will miss out. Direct engagement by physically attending Deaf clubs and centres across Scotland is one potential way of addressing these concerns. Some NHS Boards gave examples of sharing BSL videos with the Deaf clubs' members in person and being available to answer queries.
- **Four (29%)** of the NHS Boards acknowledged that they do not engage directly with Deaf BSL users sufficiently, either to share information or to receive feedback. They currently rely on indirect engagements with Deaf BSL users via some individuals and organisations. These Boards acknowledge that they need to establish a direct engagement channel with Deaf BSL users which includes involving Deaf BSL users in strategic decision-making.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that Deaf clubs and centres have been closed. This caused a new challenge for NHS Boards attempting to engage with Deaf BSL users. **Thirteen (93%)** of the NHS Boards and NHS 24 therefore had to adapt their systems quickly to respond to the pandemic and to ensure that ever-changing information was regularly translated into BSL. This led NHS 24 to create a separate BSL-specific COVID-19 webpage on the NHS Inform website, which all NHS Boards shared with local Deaf BSL users accordingly.
- NHS 24 found that it was a challenge to regularly update the NHS Inform website with accurate health information and promote NHS Inform as the main health information hub because there were often BSL videos containing inaccurate health information being shared widely by external organisations. Partly because of this, NHS 24 created the 'Communication For All' toolkit and distributed this widely with the goal of reducing the amount of inaccurate local information being shared.
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran acknowledge that there is a lack of Deaf BSL representation in their working group. When it is safe to resume engagement with Deaf BSL users following the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS Ayrshire and Arran aims to bring Deaf BSL users into the working group, so they can share information directly with the Deaf community and share the Deaf community's feedback with the working group.

- **Thirteen (93%)** of the NHS Boards and NHS 24 who provided updates in 2021 said that the COVID-19 pandemic provided one of the biggest challenges for them when it came to engaging with Deaf BSL users, because of the shifting of priorities from general health engagement to a COVID-19 focussed approach. This means that there was a very little direct two-way engagement with the Deaf community throughout the pandemic, especially since many staff were re-deployed elsewhere. However, NHS 24 worked with all the local NHS Boards to ensure that the ever-changing COVID-19 information was translated into BSL and disseminated online to the Deaf community across Scotland.
- NHS Tayside identified an issue with recruitment of qualified in-house BSL/English interpreters. Currently, demand for interpreting support strips in-house supply, meaning NHS Tayside has to rely on an interpreting agency to fill in the gaps.

4. Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) and Other NHS Boards

- Did you work with other NHS Boards or at HSCP to achieve action points in your BSL local plan?
 - If yes, what work has been done?
 - If not, why has this not happened?
 - Did the partnership(s) work effectively to benefit the Deaf community?
 - What gaps/challenges would you identify in working with other NHS Boards, HSCPs and/or other external services?
- **Thirteen (93%)** NHS Boards are involved in the Equality Leads Network. One example of the work they did together is the National Interpreting and Translation policy, planned for launch in March 2020 but delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁷. All the NHS Boards participating in the Equality Leads Network are working together to tackle any universal issues, usually by sharing feedback and information.
 - There are two further points to be taken in consideration:
 - Each NHS Board works with their own local Deaf BSL community in relation to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. The needs of Deaf BSL users vary between boundaries, therefore the work required differs in each area.
 - Every NHS Board has their own budget allocation for any service provision for their local Deaf BSL users' needs. This means the services available to BSL users varies across Board boundaries.
 - **Four (29%)** of the NHS Boards commented that they would like to see more support from the Scottish Government in relation to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. They feel that they have a lot of questions for the Government and would like to engage in further dialogue.
 - NHS Lothian would have liked to proceed with a shared BSL Local Plan in partnership with local councils and other bodies, but each body decided to establish their own BSL local plan following the retirement of the lead facilitator. NHS Lothian feels this has been to the

¹⁷ This work is also mentioned in Action 46 of the first question.

detriment of local Deaf BSL users because separate plans mean separate meetings and NHS Lothian feel is too much to expect the local community to commit to.

- The NHS Boards who are currently working in partnership with other local public bodies and have shared local BSL plans felt that working with partners on the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 has been beneficial for all parties; it has meant that partners only needed to produce, translate and distribute a single plan. Partners needed to meet with Deaf BSL users to discuss the shared local plan on fewer occasions to collect the maximum possible feedback. This is preferable for the Deaf BSL community too, ensuring that they are not over-consulted by various organisations. Boards felt that since there would be much overlap of each partner's work it would be much more beneficial for the local Deaf BSL community to be able to see their local organisations all working together to benefit them.
- NHS Forth Valley reported that they often provide resources to other NHS Boards and are often visited by staff from other NHS Boards looking to see which systems they could adopt in their own areas.

5. Future Actions and Plans

- a. What further work is required to achieve the aims set out in your BSL Local Plan?
- b. Do you have any future plans to engage with the Deaf community?

- **Thirteen (93%)** of the NHS Boards plan to resume engaging directly with local Deaf clubs on the actions remaining on their local BSL plans once it is safe to do so.
- **Three (21%)** of the NHS Boards plan to have a local BSL working group with Deaf BSL users where people will have the opportunity to suggest any changes that they would like to see and feedback on some of any issues they might have with local services. These NHS Boards would like BDA Scotland to attend the meetings to provide support.
- NHS Fife are hoping to engage with some young Deaf people in relation to the Children and Young People's Health Board, to link up with Children's Services. For example, they could provide feedback for the Equality Impact Assessments for any changes to services that affect young people, such as any GIRFEC-related changes. This is especially relevant to BSL resources as the current information and guidance in BSL focuses on an adult audience. There is a need to create child and young person-friendly BSL resources.
- NHS Forth Valley is currently working with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to establish BSL Level 1 and 2 courses taught by Deaf BSL teachers, and they hope to launch this in 2021.
- NHS 24 is currently focusing on expanding mental health services for Scotland and there will be an update on this later in the year. A BSL translation of the update will be created.
- **As information sharing via BSL videos is the only way to engage with Deaf BSL users at present, NHS 24 would like BDA Scotland and other public bodies to work with them to document Deaf people's personal experiences of accessing and using the video information they have shared throughout the pandemic.**
- **NHS 24 feel that qualitative information on the impact of the BSL videos is missing, although there have been high numbers of views, likes and shares for the videos through**

the pandemic. NHS 24 plan to arrange three Zoom sessions to engage with Deaf BSL users about their services in Autumn 2021, with BDA Scotland's support.

- NHS Tayside plan to engage a freelance Deaf trainer to provide training for staff, delivering both BSL and Deaf Awareness courses in 2021.

6. BDA Scotland

- a. Do you feel you have a good understanding of BDA Scotland's role and work?
- b. What support would you like from BDA Scotland, and to what extent?

- As the Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer only started working on the health remit in February 2020, NHS Boards and NHS 24 only recently started to gain an understanding of BDA Scotland's role and remit.
- **Thirteen (93%)** of the NHS Boards expressed their appreciation for BDA Scotland's regular updates relating to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and stated they regularly pass the information on to their communications team who then share it across their network, including with members of the local Deaf BSL community.
- **The information regularly shared with the NHS Boards and the Deaf community included BSL summaries of the Scottish Government COVID-19 news briefings, busting COVID-19 myths¹⁸ and a Winter Support webpage which included information about the flu jab and the BSL Blethers livestreams which covered various topics such as how to look after yourself in the lockdown, veganism and the environment relating to climate change.¹⁹**
- NHSGGC suggested that BDA Scotland could work with Deaf BSL users to empower them to make complaints to the NHS Boards, to ensure that NHS services make amendments following feedback.
- **NHSGGC and NHS Ayrshire and Arran felt that BDA Scotland's BSL Blethers livestreams were very informative, particularly because of the group discussion format.**
- **NHS Forth Valley demonstrated their appreciation for the list of councils and NHS Boards' Facebook page/group because they were able to share them with their contacts and they benefitted from information from other public bodies, which they were able to apply to their work.**

¹⁸ All the COVID-19 videos produced by BDA Scotland can be found at: <https://bda.org.uk/covid19/>

¹⁹ The Winter Support webpage can be found at: <https://bda.org.uk/support-winter/>

5. BDA Scotland's Perspective

BDA Scotland only took on the remit for Health in February 2020. In this short time, we have had to establish working relationships with NHS 24 and 14 NHS Boards and collate three years' worth of information for this report (it has been three years since the NHS Boards published their BSL local plans). The actions discussed focus on work that NHS Boards and NHS 24 have done since initial publication, but this report offers a more detailed outlook, providing a fuller picture not just of work that has been done, but also of work that remains to be done and what support BDA Scotland would be able to offer to support this.

BDA Scotland's acquisition of the health remit coincided with the COVID-19 outbreak which caused a national lockdown. The lockdown proved challenging for BDA Scotland, making it difficult to proceed because the pandemic necessitated a shifting of priorities for the NHS Boards and NHS 24, and has meant that any engagements relating to BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 were understandably not prioritised.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also posed a challenge for Deaf BSL users, primarily because of the ever-changing information relating to the virus and the delays in releasing that information in BSL. BDA Scotland has been active in addressing this information deficit by ensuring that Deaf BSL users do not miss out on vital information. We have created our own COVID-19 webpage with BSL-friendly videos and shared the website and links to the videos with NHS Boards, who in turn have then shared these with their contacts.

Nine (64%) of the NHS Boards, created their own COVID-19 webpages to signpost local Deaf BSL users to local resources and information, in addition to signposting to the NHS Inform website.²⁰

BDA Scotland acknowledges that the NHS Boards have done a lot of work relating to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. There are many examples of good practice, such as establishing a BSL Health Champion forum and collecting feedback from Deaf BSL users about resources.

However, one point that has been gleaned from the interviews is that many of the NHS Boards would like to have more support from BDA Scotland. Several asked for support in building direct engagement with their local Deaf BSL users and support to empower Deaf BSL users to influence decision-making at strategic level. In the 2021 updates, NHS Boards acknowledged that this remains an area of weakness for them, with the shifting priorities due to the COVID-19 pandemic stalling their direct engagement with Deaf BSL users. The NHS Boards plan to resume their engagement plans in the near future, with the support of BDA Scotland, through both face-to-face and online meetings.

BDA Scotland also would like to see more collaborative work between NHS Boards and other local public bodies in some areas, because work relating to the BSL (Scotland) Act

²⁰ The links to these webpages can be found in Appendix C at end of this report.

2015 often overlaps and Deaf BSL users often complained about being over-consulted, as each body sets up separate events. Solutions to this might include setting up a local working group with Deaf BSL users and for all the local bodies to set up joint events in Deaf clubs and centres where Deaf BSL users could provide feedback to all bodies in fewer meetings. Both NHS Fife and NHS Lanarkshire, along with representatives from other public bodies, have established pan-boundary working groups with Deaf BSL users contributing to the actions from the local BSL plans that the public bodies need to achieve. BDA Scotland would like to see NHS Boards based in other boundaries across Scotland working in partnership with local public bodies and Deaf BSL users towards the actions as stated in their local BSL plans.

BDA Scotland have worked with Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Government to ensure Deaf BSL users have access to information about the COVID-19 vaccination and the law changes around organs and tissue donation in Scotland. Zoom Q&A sessions entitled "Let's Talk About..." were held in Feb and April 2021, using a two-way dialogue approach. This is an example of how NHS Boards can use Zoom to engage with Deaf BSL users to share information about relevant topics. Adopting a two-way dialogue approach rather than one-way BSL information videos appears to be more successful.

BDA Scotland sees it as good practice that NHS 24 and some of the NHS Boards have employed Deaf BSL users internally, where they are in position to influence inter-departmental culture, and externally, to provide training to NHS staff. This helps to shape staff readiness to meet Deaf patients' needs. However, there is a universal lack of Deaf BSL representation at the strategic level and is a lack of co-production, therefore, Deaf BSL users are currently not in position to influence the decision-making that could potentially affect Deaf people's lives. BDA Scotland suggest this is an area for NHS Boards to look at during the remaining period of their strategic plans relating to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

The point about the lack of Deaf BSL representation shows that there is a need for empowerment training where Deaf BSL users could learn more about their local NHS Board's structure, policies and procedures, and how to make complaints. As there is currently no statutory obligation for NHS Boards to provide access for BSL users; BDA Scotland believes it is vital that Deaf BSL users develop the understanding and confidence to challenge and respond to any inequalities they experience. This includes the confidence to participate in strategic level decision-making with their local NHS Board's services.

BDA Scotland hosted 6 empowerment training events for members of the Deaf community between October 2020 – August 2021 where Deaf BSL users learned about how to engage with their local NHS Board, how to provide feedback and how to set up a forum/group. The aim of these events was for Deaf BSL users to become more confident in engaging with their local NHS Boards, to ensure that their access to the NHS services is of the highest possible quality.

The empowerment training could also be beneficial for NHS frontline staff, management and Board members. BSL awareness training on its own is not enough to influence a change in the policies and procedures relating to BSL access and ensuring that Deaf BSL users can fully understand the health information they need.

Therefore, BDA Scotland hope that empowerment training could lead to both Deaf BSL users and relevant NHS personnel having the confidence to engage directly with each other, with BDA Scotland's support. This could lead to a direct working relationship which could benefit Deaf BSL users across Scotland in the long term.

BSL Awareness training would help NHS personnel to distinguish the difference between the social model and the medical model of deafness. As part of the training, NHS personnel would learn that BSL is a recognised language and that Deaf BSL users see themselves as a linguistic minority rather than a disabled group. This would influence the culture within NHS Boards and ensure that Deaf BSL users could access services using their first language, BSL.

There are specific challenges for some NHS Boards in providing face-to-face BSL/English interpreting support. This is especially true for the Boards whose boundaries contains remote and rural communities. BSL/English interpreters would need to make long journeys for short duration appointments. NHS Eileanan Siar felt that it was not financially viable to do this, so they elected to provide a VRI service for the majority of appointments for Deaf BSL users.

In addition to this, the NHS Boards based in the North of Scotland and the Northern Isles brought up concerns around the limited numbers of BSL/English interpreters in their area. They would like to see some support from the Scottish Government to increase the pool of BSL/English interpreters in the region.

There is universal confusion about the difference between VRS and VRI services. This has been exacerbated by the introduction of the 'Near Me' service in 2020. BDA Scotland will need to work with all the NHS Boards, Scottish Government, contactSCOTLAND-BSL and the Deaf BSL community on this so all parties can distinguish the differences between these services and use each service appropriately.

It was clear from meeting with some NHS Boards to update their progress that the response to the COVID-19 pandemic varied, with some NHS services not allowing BSL/English interpreters to be physically present because of COVID-19 restrictions. This led to an increased use of both the VRI service and the Near Me service for appointments, which, in a positive light, led to more Deaf people becoming familiar with the use of technology. However, once the restrictions ease, it is clear that a majority of Deaf BSL users will still prefers face-to-face interpreting support for their appointments. Therefore, BDA Scotland would recommend that NHS Boards offer the option in accordance with patients' choices



BDA Scotland's Perspective (cont'd)

and preferences, including allowing patients to specify whether they would prefer a male or female interpreter. BDA Scotland also advise that it would be good practice for NHS Boards to inform patients in advance of their appointments which interpreter has been booked so they know who will be interpreting their personal information.

6. BDA Scotland's Recommendations

BDA Scotland would recommend that:

- 1 NHS Boards who have their own social media platforms should share relevant BSL videos and any signposting information widely, including on the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 website and social media platforms.
- 2 When the NHS Boards establish their new websites, they should place a BSL emblem on their home page, re-directing people to a webpage that contains all their BSL resources. Once created, the emblem should be promoted widely so Deaf BSL users recognise it and know what it means.

Examples of good practice:

Food Standards Scotland: <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/>



Education Scotland's Parentzone: <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/>



- 3 When NHS Boards publish information, BSL versions should be produced and published concurrently with the English text version so Deaf BSL users can access and understand the information at the same time as their hearing peers.
- 4 If the NHS Boards produce their own materials in BSL, these should be presented by a Deaf BSL user who would be able present health information in a culturally appropriate manner. BSL Deaf users are more likely to engage with such material.
- 5 NHS Boards should engage with Deaf BSL users to ascertain which topics they would most like information provided for in BSL.
- 6 Any BSL videos relating to mental wellbeing could be created and shared with Deaf BSL users, including any tips about how to ensure emotional wellbeing, self-care, how to manage anxiety, etc. The videos could be promoted via social media platforms, including the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 Facebook group.

- 7** To tackle the communication isolation that Deaf BSL-using patients experience within NHS wards, all NHS Boards should consider contracting with a VRI service provider, if they have not done so already. The VRI service would enable the ward staff to communicate with Deaf patients when they go to check on them. NHS Boards should ask Deaf patients what their communication preferences are before committing to the use of VRI services. NHS Boards should also inform Deaf BSL users in advance which interpreter has been booked for their appointment.
- 8** NHS Boards should recruit Deaf BSL users to their working groups and empower them to create a video suggesting how to reduce isolation. This could be shared with vulnerable Deaf BSL users via Deaf BSL community connections.
- 9** When NHS Boards create specific BSL videos relating to the contactSCOTLAND-BSL VRS service or VRI services, they could share the videos via the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 social media platforms and website so Deaf BSL users across Scotland could access the information.
- 10** NHS Boards should continue to try and engage directly with Deaf BSL users on a regular basis, with BDA Scotland's support, as part of a bridge-building process. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 website contains useful links, including contact details for all the Deaf clubs and centres, to facilitate this.
- 11** The Equality Lead Network could invite the Access and Inclusion (Engagement) Officer to one of their meetings to discuss how BDA Scotland could support the Equality Lead Network in relation to BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.
- 12** Where community engagement plans have been put on hold due to COVID-19, we would recommend that the NHS Boards set up virtual meetings with Deaf BSL users using Zoom, as it is more suitable for interpreted calls than other video calling platforms. This would ensure that the NHS Boards could continue to engage with Deaf BSL users, rather than waiting until Deaf clubs and centres reopen.
- 13** Instead of only uploading in-vision translations of TV-broadcast health adverts online, translated versions of the adverts for could be broadcast on TV so Deaf BSL users could access information on an equal basis.
- 14** One of the gaps identified for NHS Boards is a lack of youth-friendly resources in BSL for Deaf young people. NHS Boards need to reach out and engage with Deaf young people with age appropriate BSL resources.
- 15** NHS Boards need to ensure that there is effective handover of information for new staff, so they can familiarise themselves with any work done previously in relation to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. High staff turnover has caused some gaps in the information being shared.

7. Conclusion with Key Points

Thirteen (93%) of the NHS Boards and NHS 24 have done much work on the action points of their local BSL plans over the course of the three years since the plans' publication. The work has helped to ensure that the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 is making a difference to Deaf BSL users when accessing their local health services. However, it is clear that more work remains to be done by NHS Boards before Deaf BSL users enjoy the full benefit of the Act in relation to access to local and national health provision.

In August 2021, BDA Scotland recommended that the following actions and outcomes should be taken into consideration over the next three years:

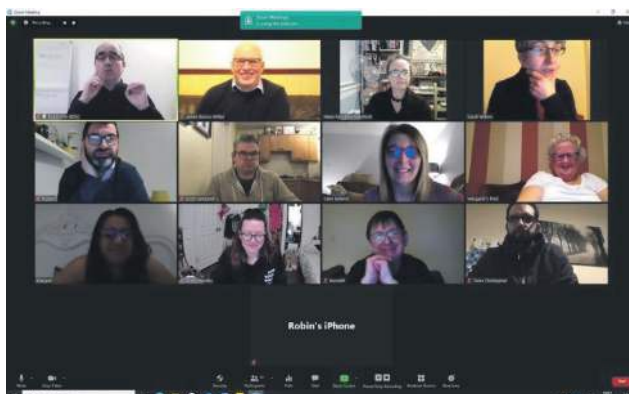
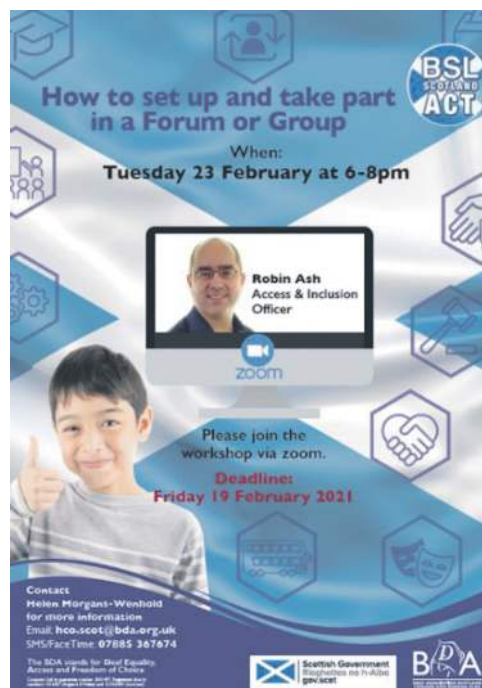
	Actions	Outcomes for Deaf BSL Users	Outcomes for NHS Boards
1.	Empowerment training provided by BDA for both BSL users and NHS Boards	Deaf BSL users become confident in promoting the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and have their voices heard.	NHS Boards become aware of how to engage with Deaf BSL users and establish a direct working relationship with their local Deaf BSL community.
2.	BSL Awareness training and BSL Level 1-3 learning for NHS frontline staff	Deaf BSL users in Scotland are trained and employed as presenters in health information videos and to teach BSL Awareness and BSL Levels 1 – 3 to frontline staff.	After acquiring both BSL Awareness and BSL qualifications, frontline staff will be able to confidently engage with Deaf BSL users directly and ensure that BSL access is provided in NHS facilities.
3.	BSL Roadshow (BDA Scotland leading the roadshow events)	Deaf BSL users to have the opportunity to have their views about their BSL local plans heard and confident to participate in their local working group.	NHS Boards and NHS 24 are provided with information and feedback on their BSL local plan. NHS Boards and NHS 24 could use the information and feedback to implement changes to meet Deaf BSL users' needs.
4.	Training on how to use Video Relay Services (VRS) and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services , including contactSCOTLAND-BSL	Deaf BSL users understand the difference between the VRS and VRI services and know how to use these services appropriately, including contactSCOTLAND-BSL.	NHS Boards' staff and Board members understand what the services are, including contactSCOTLAND-BSL and how to support Deaf BSL users to access these services within NHS facilities.
5.	Ongoing funding for delivery of actions outlined in BSL local Plans and for BSL translation work	See no. 2 regarding Deaf BSL presenters. Deaf BSL users would have greater access to health information in BSL.	NHS Boards engage directly with Deaf BSL users through both face-to-face and virtual interactions as well as ensuring that health information is translated into BSL.
6.	Engagement (BDA Scotland supporting the engagement events)	Deaf BSL users empowered to influence the strategic decision-making that affects Deaf BSL users' access to local NHS services and to provide information and feedback on their access to their local NHS Board through direct engagement using the working group.	NHS Boards reach out to their local BSL communities through face-to-face and virtual engagements as well as having BSL access to their websites and social media platforms.

8. BDA Scotland's Updates 2021

In addition to the original October 2020 recommendations in the 'Conclusion with Key Points' section, BDA Scotland recommend the following actions, as of August 2021:

(the numbers below follow the Actions as stated in the table in page 29)

- I. BDA Scotland hosted 6 empowerment training sessions via Zoom for Deaf BSL users only, with a Deaf trainer from BDA facilitating discussion on topics such as how to engage with local councils and NHS Boards, and how to give feedback to local councils and NHS Boards. A total of 55 Deaf BSL users attended. One Deaf BSL user who attended subsequently said that they had used what they had learned to adapt how they provide feedback to their local NHS Board, employing the “sandwich” approach. The same person then created a BSL video to provide feedback about the NHS Inform website and sent this to NHS 24. Both of these actions were as a direct result of what they learned in the empowerment training.**



Empowerment training – February 2021

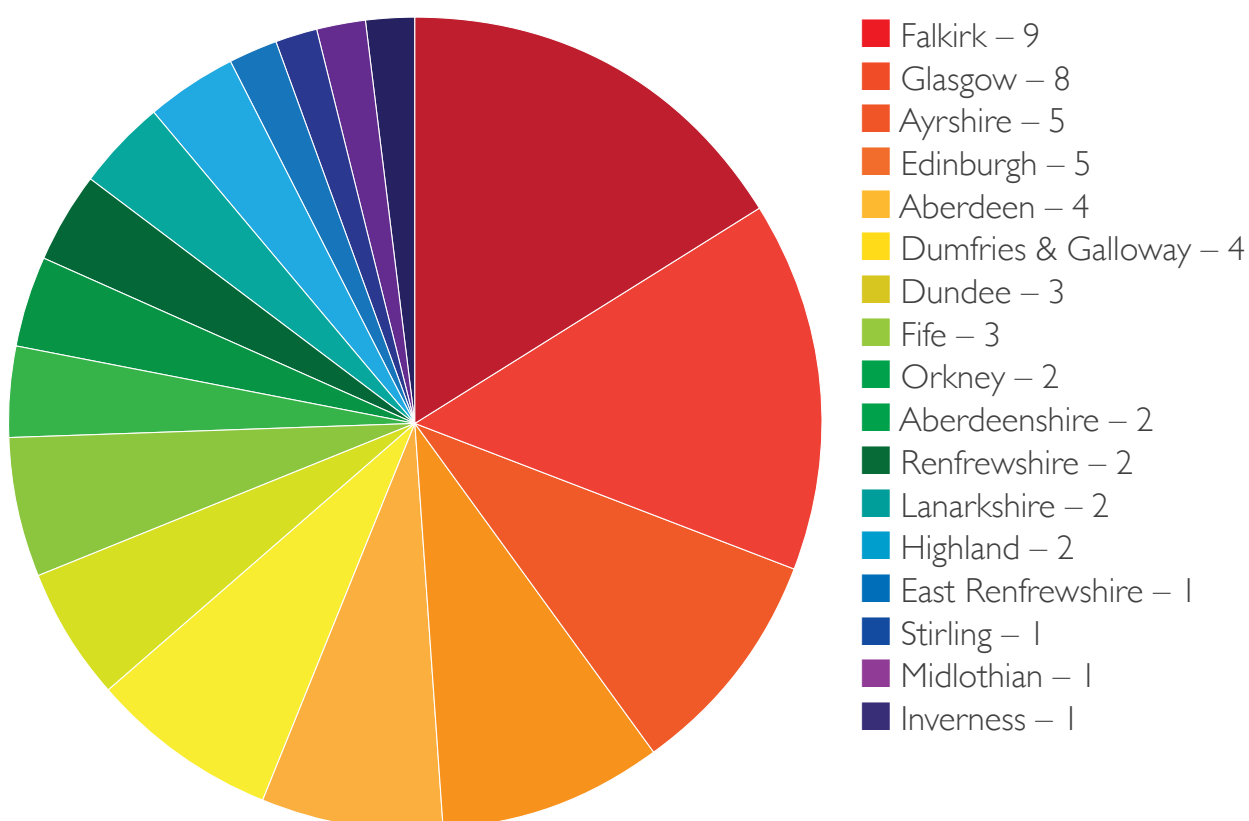


Empowerment training – July 2021

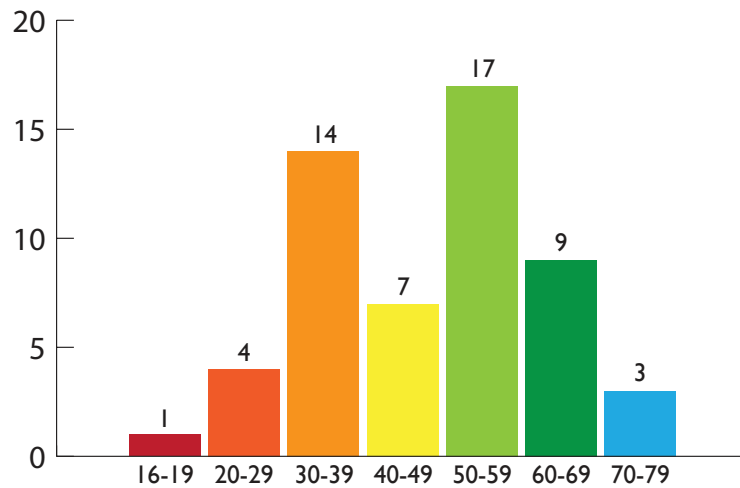
Demographic data from BDA Scotland's six empowerment training events

Date	Participants	Geographical		Gender	Age Group	Ethnicity
6 in Oct 2020- Aug 2021	55	9x Falkirk 8x Glasgow 5x Ayrshire 5x Edinburgh 4x Aberdeen 4x Dumfries & Galloway 3x Dundee 3x Fife 2x Orkney	2x Aberdeenshire 2x Renfrewshire 2x Lanarkshire 2x Highland 1x East Renfrewshire 1x Stirling 1x Midlothian 1x Inverness	29x Female 26x Male	1x 16-19 4x 20-29 14x 30-39 7x 40-49 17x 50-59 9x 60-69 3x 70-79	46x White Scottish/British 4x White European 5x Asian

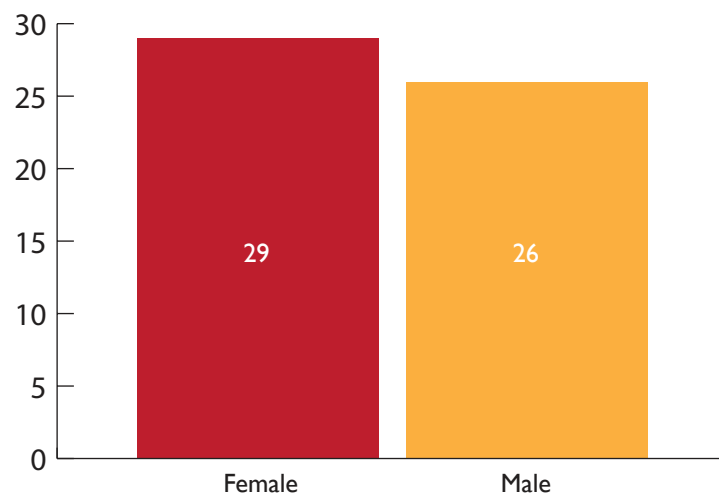
Geographical demography of the empowerment training participants



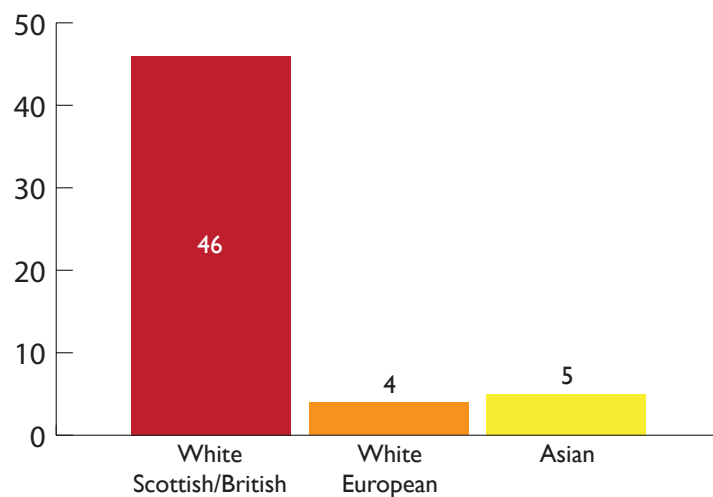
Age Group of the empowerment training participants



Gender of the empowerment training participants



Ethnicity of the empowerment training participants



- BDA Scotland hosted 7 Roadshow events via Zoom for Deaf BSL users, with 63 Deaf people attending to provide feedback on their local BSL plans and their access to local council and NHS Board services. A summary report of this will be compiled and published for the Deaf community by the end of 2021.



Progress Report 2021 Roadshow

BSL Scotland ACT

BDA Scotland are working with the Scottish Government. We want your views and feedback on the BSL Plans in Scotland for the BSL Progress Report in October 2021

Frankie McLean
BSL Policy Officer
Scottish Government

Helen Morgans-Wenhold
Council

James Barling-Pittler
BSL

Location	Date/Time
Islands and the North of Scotland: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands	Thursday, 18 February at 10pm
The South of Scotland: Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire	Saturday, 6 March at 11am
The West of Scotland: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire	Tuesday, 11 May at 2pm
The East of Scotland: Dundee City, East Lothian, Edinburgh City, Midlothian, Perth & Kinross, West Lothian	Saturday, 5 June at 11am
The Central of Scotland: Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Fife, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling	Tuesday, 13 July at 2pm

Please book your space and you will receive a Zoom invitation.

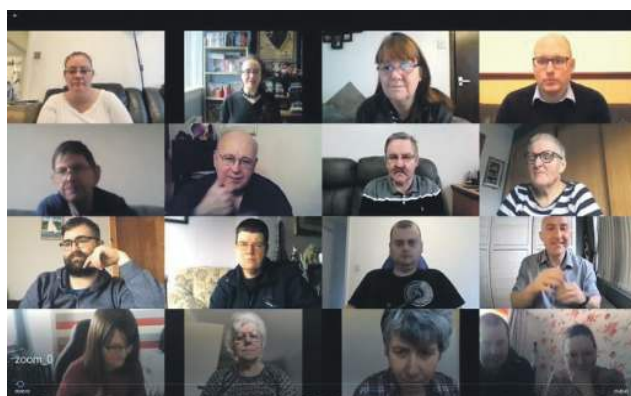
These meetings are for BSL Users only

Contact
Helen Morgans-Wenhold
for more information
Email: hco.scot@bda.org.uk
SMS/FaceTime: 07885 367674

The BDA stands for Deaf Equality, Access and Freedom of Choice

BSL Scotland ACT

BSA



North of Scotland and Scottish Islands Roadshow
February 2021



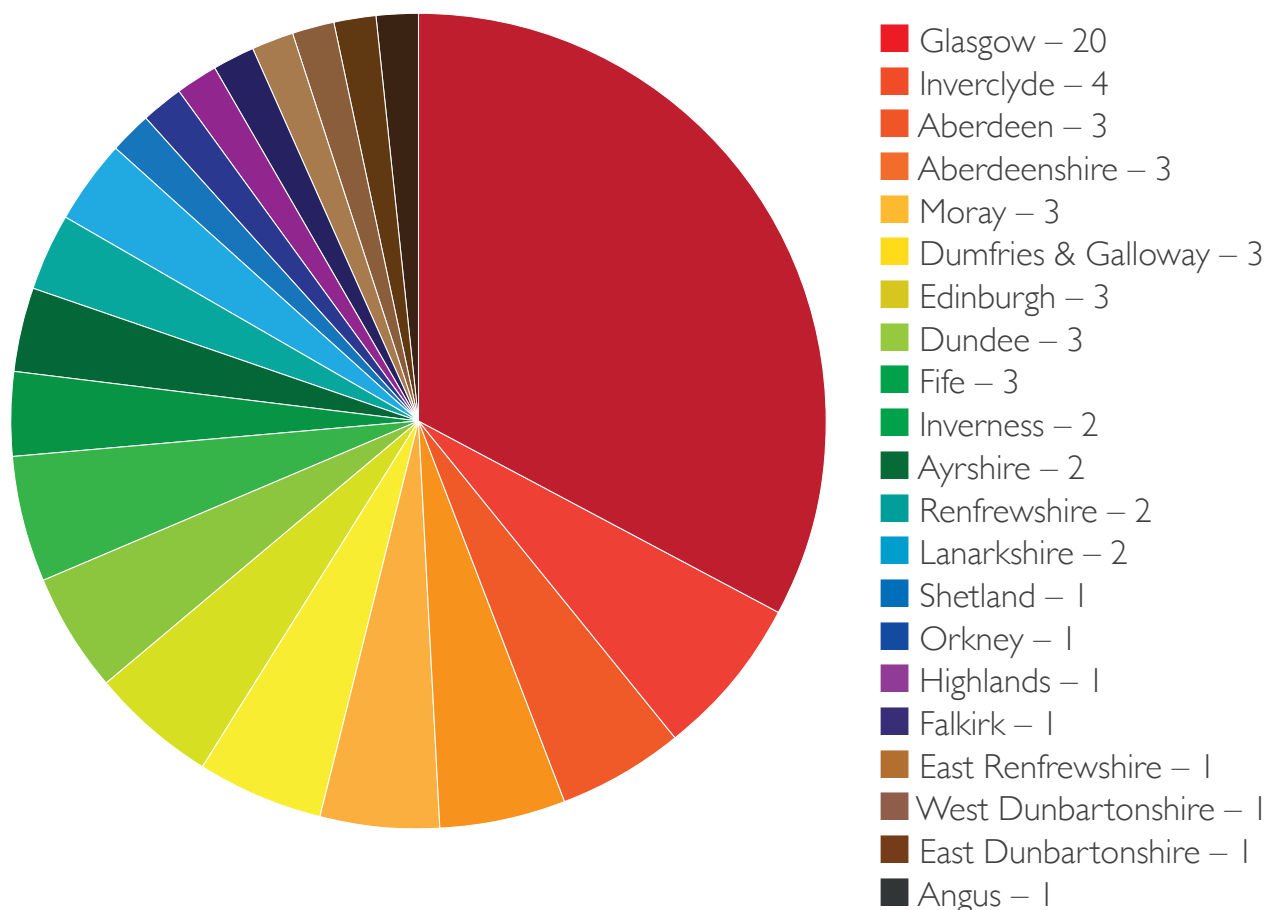
Deafblind Scotland Roadshow
April 2021

BDA Scotland's Updates (cont'd)

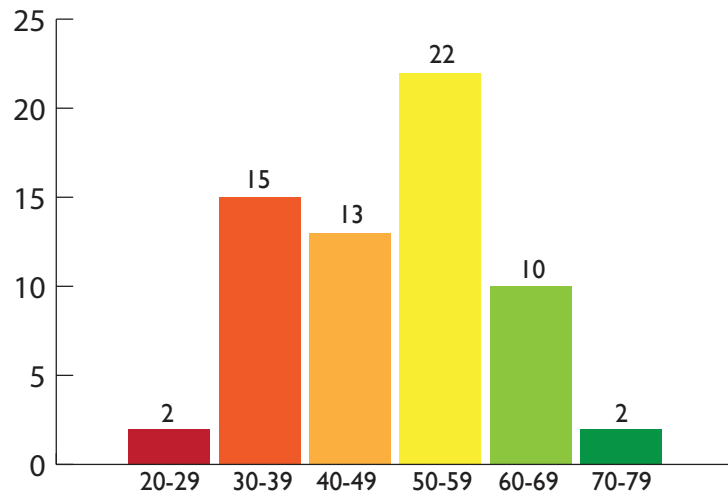
Demographical Data from BDA Scotland's 7 Roadshow events

Date	Participants	Geographical		Gender	Age Group	Ethnicity
7 from Feb 2021- July 2021	63	20x Glasgow	2x Renfrewshire	37x Female	2x 20-29	48x White Scottish/British
		4x Inverclyde	2x Lanarkshire	26x Male	15x 30-39	14x Asian
		3x Aberdeen	1x Shetland		13x 40-49	1x White European
		3x Aberdeenshire	1x Orkney		22x 50-59	
		3x Moray	1x Highlands		10x 60-69	
		3x Dumfries & Galloway	1x Falkirk		2x 70-79	
		3x Edinburgh	1x East Renfrewshire			
		3x Dundee	1x West Dunbartonshire			
		3x Fife	1x East Dunbartonshire			
		2x Inverness	1x Angus			
		2x Ayrshire				

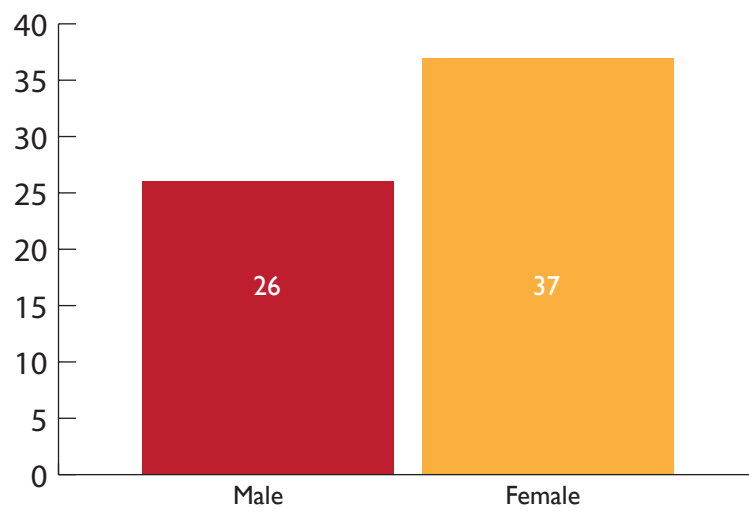
Geographical location of Roadshow participants



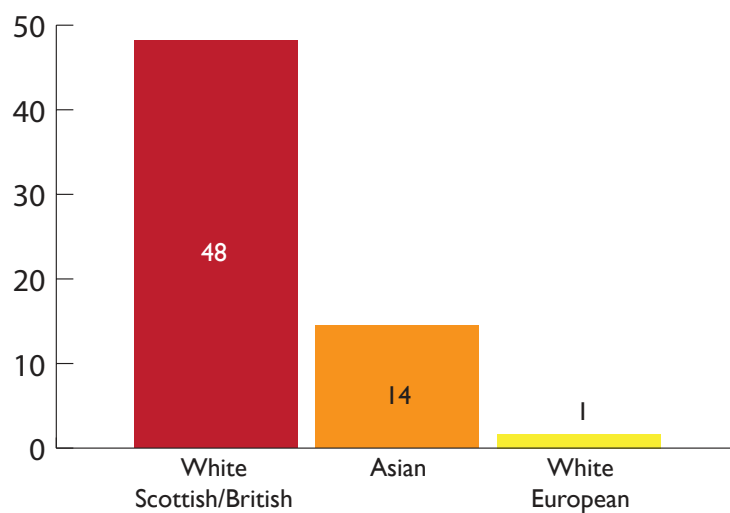
Roadshow participants by age group



Gender of Roadshow participants



Ethnicity of Roadshow participants



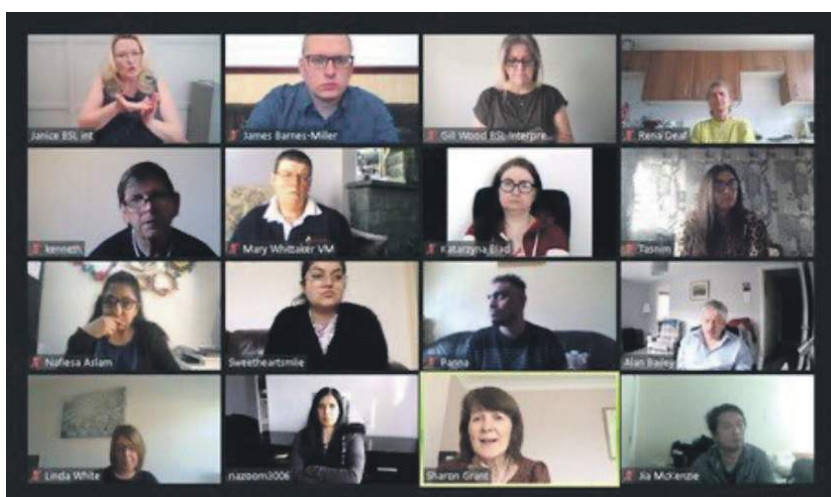
6. BDA Scotland facilitated two “Let’s Talk About...” Zoom events relating to health. Deaf BSL users had the opportunity talk to health professionals from Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Government to find out about the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine and the law change for organs and tissue donation in Scotland. A total of 32 Deaf BSL users attended the Zoom events to ask questions such as:

- “Would having diabetes affect me receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?”
- “How would my faith affect organ and tissue donation?”

Let’s Talk About COVID-19 event February 2021




Organ and Tissue Donation Scotland event April 2021

The feedback received from Deaf BSL users demonstrated their satisfaction with the information received:

“Many thanks. Good information.” **Deaf BSL user, Moray**

“The members found the chat extremely useful and interesting. It was good to have them involved in such a hot topic. Many thanks again for inviting SEMDC members and for giving them access to this vital information.” **Deaf member of SEMDC**

“Very helpful, I feel more confident now that I know more information, so I can talk to my family about organ and tissue donation.” **Deaf BSL user, Glasgow**

The professionals who took part sent in their appreciation for BDA Scotland’s support for the event:

“Thanks so much for organising the session today, it was really well managed. It was really helpful to get the feedback from Deaf BSL users and I’m happy to note any further feedback or respond to any further queries.” **Health Improvement Manager, Public Health Scotland**

“Thank you for arranging the session this afternoon. [My colleague] and I were really pleased to get such a wide range of pertinent questions.” **Policy Manager, Scottish Government**

BDA Scotland plan to follow up with the actions on the following key points:

- 1** BDA Scotland plan to continue to engage with Deaf BSL users to ask for feedback about their access to the local NHS services.
- 2** BDA Scotland plan to share information with the NHS Boards from the empowerment training events and the Roadshows, to see what actions to take forward with the Deaf BSL community.
- 3** BDA Scotland plan to support NHS Boards and the Deaf community to resume engagement following the COVID-19 pandemic, with the use of virtual meetings as well as physical meetings when it is safe to do so.
- 4** BDA Scotland plan to continue to provide post-COVID-19 empowerment training for Deaf BSL users, to help them become more confident in engaging with NHS Boards.
- 5** As the first point of contact, BDA Scotland will facilitate bridge-building between the Deaf community and NHS Boards, to support them to achieve the actions stated in the BSL National Plan and ultimately improve quality of access in BSL to all NHS services.

9. Appendix

A) BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 website for the NHS Boards BSL Plans: <http://bslscotlandact2015.scot/plans/>

B) Questions for the NHS Boards:

1. Progress of the BSL Local Plan

- a. Do you feel that your NHS Board has made some contribution to the action points under the BSL National Plan (under Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) numbers 39 to 49 and are on track?
- b. Do you feel that your BSL Local Plan is progressing and on track?

2. Deaf Community

- a. What work have you progressed with the Deaf community?
- b. Can you share any achievements and examples of good practice that your NHS Board are seeing in relation to BSL over the last three years?
- c. Do you feel you have been able to engage effectively with the Deaf community to empower them to use your complaint procedures? Are they accessible to Deaf BSL users?
- d. Has there been any feedback from BSL users?
- e. What changes/impacts have you achieved for the Deaf community?

3. Challenges and Gaps

- a. What challenges did you face in your work in informing and promoting your BSL Plan?
- b. Have you identified any new gaps since your BSL plan was published?

4. Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) and Other NHS Boards

- a. Did you work with other NHS Boards or at HSCP level to achieve action points in your BSL local plan?
 - i) If yes, what work has been done?
 - ii) If not, why has this not happened?
- b. Did the partnership(s) work effectively, to benefit the Deaf community?
- c. What gaps/challenges would you identify in working with other NHS Boards, HSCPs and/or other external services?

5. Future Actions and Plans

- a. What further work is required to achieve the aims set out in your BSL Local Plan?
- b. Do you have any future plans to engage with the Deaf community?

6. BDA Scotland

- a. Do you feel you have a good understanding of BDA Scotland's role and work?
- b. What support would you like from BDA Scotland, and to what extent?

C) Specific BSL-related NHS Board websites and social media platforms:

(As of August 2021)

NHS Board	BSL-related webpage	BSL-related Facebook groups	COVID-19 weblinks
NHS Inform	https://www.nhsinform.scot/translations/languages/british-sign-language-bsl		https://www.nhsinform.scot/translations/languages/british-sign-language-bsl/illnesses-and-conditions/coronavirus-covid-19
NHS Ayrshire and Arran		North Ayrshire Sensory Impairment Group Facebook	
NHS Borders	http://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/our-services/general-services/accessibility/	Scottish Borders Sensory Services Facebook	
NHS Fife	https://www.nhsfife.org/about-us/equality-and-human-rights/british-sign-language/	Fife Council Deaf Communication Service Facebook	https://www.nhsfife.org/about-us/equality-and-human-rights/british-sign-language/covid-19-resources-for-bsl-users/
NHS Forth Valley	https://nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/az-of-services/disability-service/	Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership Sensory Services Facebook	(See the BSL-related webpage)
NHS Grampian	https://www.nhsgrampian.org/about-us/equality-and-diversity/other-languages-and-formats/bsl/	Moray BSL Services Facebook	
NHS Glasgow and Greater Clyde	https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/working-with-us/hr-connect/staff-banks/interpreting-services/british-sign-language/	BSL Health Champions Facebook	https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/health-issues/covid-19-coronavirus/for-patients-the-public/bsl-other-languages/bsl-info/
NHS Lanarkshire		Deaf Services Lanarkshire – Home Facebook	https://www.nhs.uk/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/other-formats/
NHS Lothian	https://services.nhslothian.scot/mhdeafservice/Pages/default.aspx		(See the BSL-related webpage)
NHS Tayside	https://www.nhs.uk/Search/index.htm?searchterm=BSL&btn-search=search		

10. The British Deaf Association

The BDA stands for **Deaf Equality, Access and Freedom of choice**

Vision

Our vision is Deaf people fully participating and contributing as equal and valued citizens in wider society.

Mission

Our Mission is to ensure a world in which the language, culture, community, diversity and heritage of Deaf people in the UK is respected and fully protected, ensuring that Deaf people can participate and contribute as equal and valued citizens in the wider society. This will be achieved through:

- Improving the quality of life by empowering Deaf individuals and groups;
- Enhancing freedom, equality and diversity;
- Protecting and promoting BSL and ISL.

Values

The BDA is a Deaf people's organisation representing a diverse, vibrant and ever-changing community of Deaf people. Our activities, promotions, and partnerships with other organisations aim to empower our community towards full participation and contribution as equal and valued citizens in the wider society. We also aim to act as guardians of BSL and ISL.

- 1. Protecting our Deaf culture and Identity** – we value Deaf peoples' sense of Deaf culture and identity derived from belonging to a cultural and linguistic group, sharing similar beliefs and experiences with a sense of belonging.
- 2. Asserting our linguistic rights** – we value the use of BSL and ISL as a human right. As such, BSL and ISL must be preserved, protected and promoted because we also value the right of Deaf people to use their first or preferred language.
- 3. Fostering our community** – we value Deaf people with diverse perspectives, experiences and abilities. We are committed to equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination with a special focus on those affecting Deaf people and their language.
- 4. Achieving equality in legal, civil and human rights** – we value universal human rights such as the right to receive education and access to information in sign language, and freedom from political restrictions on our opportunities to become full citizens.
- 5. Developing our alliance** – we value those who support us and are our allies because they share our vision and mission, and support our BSL and ISL community.

About the British Deaf Association

Founded in 1890, the British Deaf Association (BDA) is a national Deaf-led organisation that works directly with Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL). Our work concentrates on campaigning for equal rights on a national level and working at a local level empowering Deaf people to achieve access to their local public services. This is carried out through projects delivering individual and community advocacy.

We also work to ensure BSL/ISL is included by public bodies by delivering a public commitment through signing the BSL and ISL Charter.

Our Board of Trustees are all Deaf (we use the capitalised 'D' to denote the fact that we have a separate language and culture), and 80% of our staff are Deaf.

Many Deaf people who use BSL/ISL lack access to education, health services, employment and other public services. Our work is designed to empower Deaf people and to improve access to general information and public services. We seek to achieve this by working with Deaf people at the local level through setting up forums to lobby public bodies and supporting Deaf people individually.

This is in line with the overall BDA objectives, which are: **D**eaf **E**quality, **A**ccess and **F**reedom of choice.

For a list of signatories to our BSL and ISL Charter, FAQs, and other information, including what the BDA can do for your organisation, please look at our website: www.bda.org.uk



020 7697 4140 | www.bda.org.uk | bda@bda.org.uk

The BDA stands for **D**eaf **E**quality, **A**ccess and **F**reedom of Choice

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