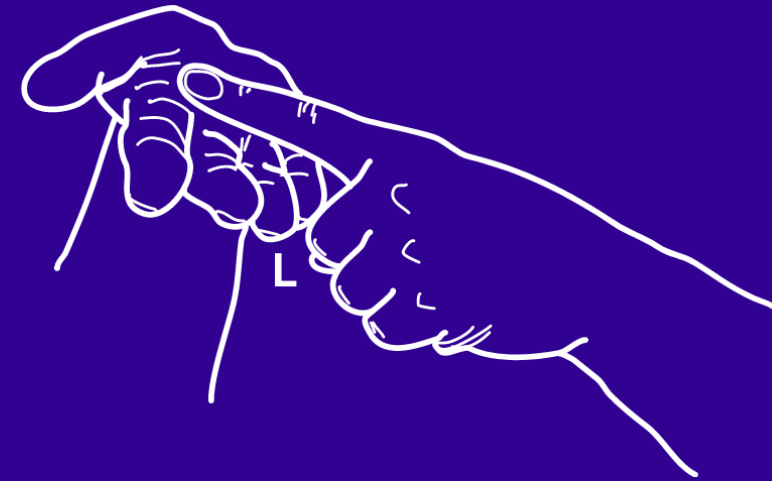
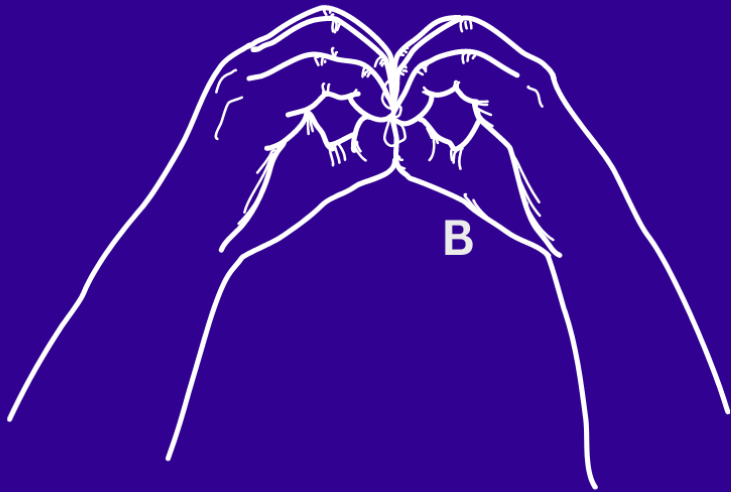


East

Renfrewshire



British Sign Language
Plan 2024-2030

Introduction

British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and regional variations. Most importantly, it is a language which enables many of our deaf and deafblind citizens to participate in their communities, culture and the economy.

The Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, learn, work and visit. This means that people whose first or preferred language is BSL will be fully involved in daily and public life in Scotland, as active, healthy citizens, and will be empowered to make informed choices about every aspect of their lives. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years, showing how they will promote and support BSL.

The second National BSL plan was published in November 2024 and through extensive consultation, identified ten priority areas for focus over the next six years. Some of these priority areas will be led nationally (such as BSL Data and Transport) however we are committed to supporting the delivery of the Scottish Governments actions under these themes and will look to exercise local influence where possible.

This is the second BSL Plan for East Renfrewshire (as required under the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015). It sets out our ambitions and actions for 2024-2030 and is based on the same goals as the National BSL Plan:

- 1. Delivering the BSL Plan 2024-2030**
- 2. BSL Accessibility**
- 3. Children, Young People and their Families**
- 4. Access to Employment**
- 5. Health and Wellbeing**
- 6. Celebrating BSL Culture**
- 7. BSL Data**
- 8. Transport**
- 9. Access to Justice**
- 10. Democratic Participation**

The 2011 Census showed that 133 in East Renfrewshire live in households where BSL is used. Throughout this plan we refer to 'BSL users'. This covers all people whose first or preferred language is BSL, including those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss.

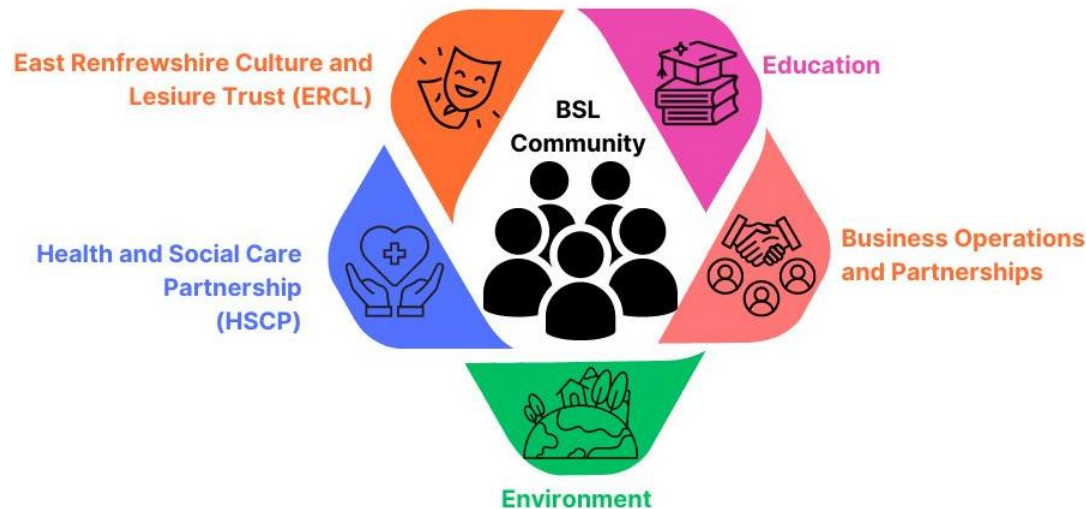
How we created this plan

This plan has been developed across Council services and partners, including support from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Most importantly, this plan has been created alongside members of our community who use or represent someone that uses BSL.

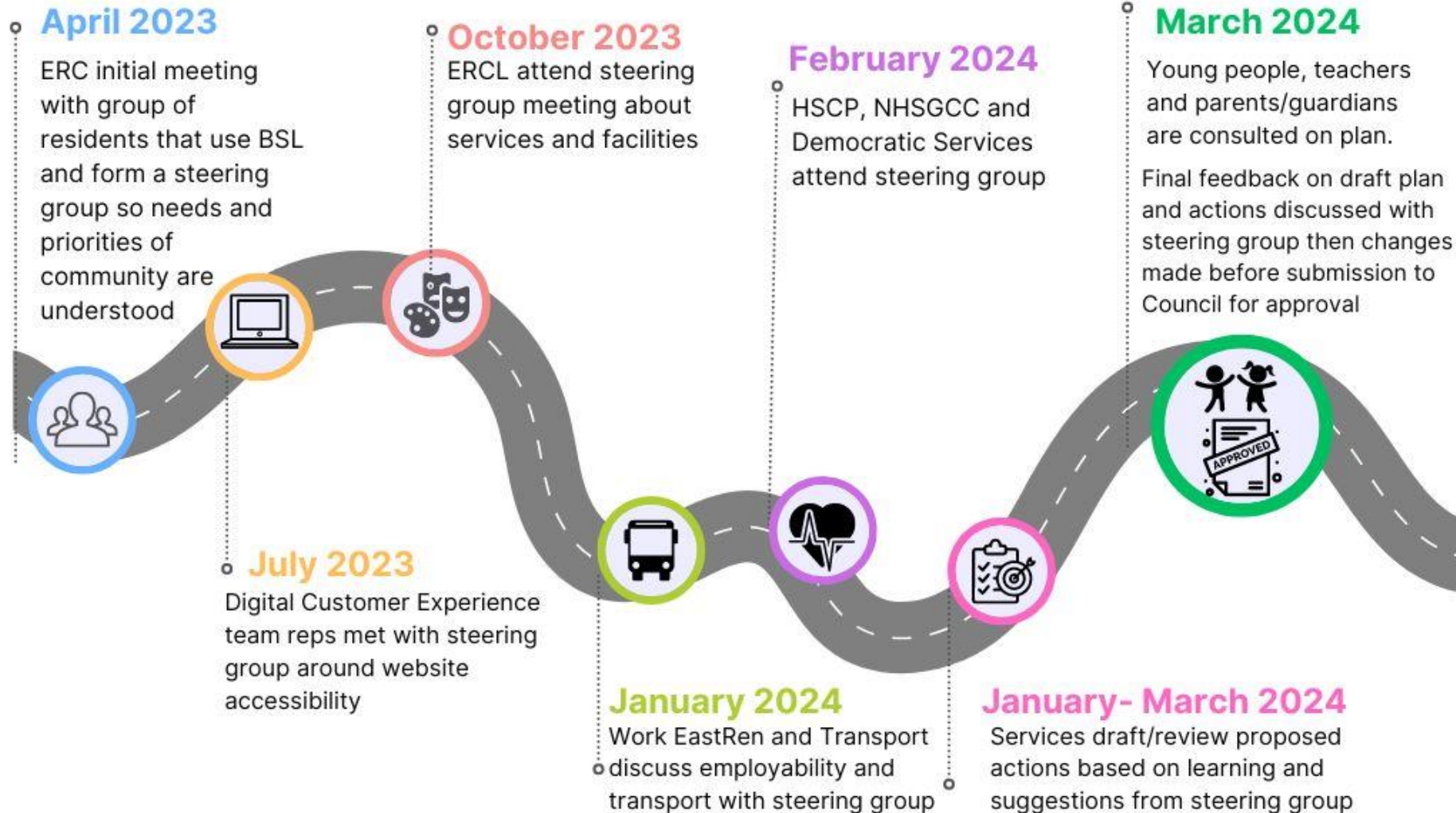
Since April 2023, East Renfrewshire Council have been regularly meeting a steering group of eight residents that use BSL to understand their experiences of services and what their needs are. We have been working together to produce a BSL Plan that is reflective of their priorities and the changes they wish to see, in order to make East Renfrewshire a better place to live for all people that use BSL. Their views are the heart of this plan and have been vital in the drafting of actions under each priority area. The below diagrams show who has been involved in creating this plan and a timeline of the partnership work that's been carried out with the group.



We also met with a representative group of children and young people. They shared what makes them feel included and successful in school and other settings and they also described some of the barriers they face day-to-day. Consultation with our Teachers of the Deaf and a small group of parents and carers further informed our plan as it relates to children, young people and their families.



East Renfrewshire BSL Plan Community Engagement Process



What we have achieved so far

During our first BSL Plan from 2018-2024:

- We delivered BSL Awareness training delivered to over 60 members of staff and third sector colleagues throughout 2023 and 2024. This was delivered by a Deaf person with lived experience, over Teams and outlined some of the barriers people who use BSL face in their daily lives and ways hearing people could better support BSL users accessing services, as well as teaching some basic finger spelling
- BSL interpreted events were offered to support community engagement and participation in culture, including ERCL's Remembering Together Community Covid Memorial., where the final sharing event and discussion in November 2022 were facilitated with BSL interpretation.
- Similarly at East Renfrewshire's Culture Strategy 2024-2029 consultation in December 2023, BSL interpretation was provided, which included for the presentation and breakout discussion groups.
- East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure developed and delivered Creative Scotland funded 'Storytelling with BSL' sessions for young people aged 9-12 to learn BSL skills, as part of Eastwood Park Theatre's aim to make theatre accessible to all. The sessions took place on a weekly basis from September - November 2022 and were delivered in partnership with West of Scotland BSL Tutors. The classes were suitable for deaf or hearing children, who were then given the opportunity to participate in a week-long course at Eastwood Park Theatre and use their new BSL skills to create a piece of theatre and perform to an invited audience.
- ERCL created and published a BSL interpreted video with captions to provide information on the 2024 programme for Eastwood Park Theatre in February 2024. The video was published on East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure's website and highlighted under the accessibility section, in addition to being circulated to local BSL community members. The video used BSL to explain the content of the programme, upcoming shows, film screenings and captioned events, as well as providing information on how to book tickets or gain further information about accessibility at Eastwood Park Theatre and accessing ERCL's services.



- Eastwood Park Theatre hosted the preview of 'Wake Up', three physical theatre pieces in ERCL's 2023/24 theatre programme. The series of three short plays by BSL theatre makers and directed by BSL users, was developed at Eastwood Park Theatre before touring Scotland. In March 2023, The Third Sister, was performed in ERCL's community facilities by theatre company Solar Bear, who work with deaf and hearing actors, theatre makers, artists and young people. The play was performed in English and British Sign Language and was accompanied by a film screening of Solar Flares: A Deaf Heritage Project, at Clarkston Halls.
- Many schools have engaged in learning some basic BSL such as signing a song, finger spelling names and learning the days of the week in BSL. This often takes place during a focus week like Languages Week Scotland or World Sign Languages Week



Our BSL Plan for 2024-2030

1. Delivering the BSL Plan 2024-2030

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any BSL resources that are produced should involve and place deaf people at the forefront • It's important to see actual progress, creating the plan is one part but actually delivering on actions is vital • BSL users are often forgotten/not prioritised so awareness is important for services to be able to consider the impact decisions could have
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>to improve outcomes for BSL users by embedding the needs of BSL users in relevant Council and partnership policies, plans and strategies in order to develop solutions to the barriers faced by BSL users in their daily lives.</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work across departments and with partners in a BSL Working Group that meets at least every 6 months to deliver on and progress the actions set out in our BSL Plan. This will also include creating a Teams channel for the group to regularly communicate, share information or seek peer support • Regularly engage with members of the BSL community (minimum twice a year) to monitor progress and understand ongoing need. • Publish a progress report on the actions at the midway point for this plan in 2027 • Offer Scottish BSL Awareness Training each financial year to staff within the available budget envelop, particularly targeting frontline services such as teachers and those in health care settings

2. BSL Accessibility

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important information online about the Council is only available in English (limited information in BSL) and can be jargon heavy which makes it difficult to understand and navigate, <i>"if it's important for a hearing person to know, it's important for a deaf person and we should have access to this in our own language"</i> • Too much written text on publications and not visual enough • Increased digitalisation of Council services has created further barriers for BSL users- as online forms are all in English this can make these difficult to complete • Any BSL information on the website should be easy to find with BSL symbol and any content produced should be checked with BSL users first to ensure standard of interpretation is accessible • Technology can be helpful such as the use of Contact Scotland but face to face is still preferred for important appointments
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>To remove accessibility as a barrier for BSL users in all aspects of life, recognising the importance of having accessible information in the right format at the right time, utilising technology and increasing people's awareness of communication tools</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in an Inclusive and Accessible Communications working group to revise a policy around this subject, which will include best practice guidelines around interpretation and embed this across the Council • Promote the use of Contact Scotland BSL to employees, partners and BSL users through information sharing and various communication channels • Increase the number of BSL videos on the Council and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure's websites each year within available resourcing, targeting the priority areas set out in this plan (such as Transport and Employability) or topics identified as a priority either by BSL community or services • Create a webpage in 2024 that is easily accessible on the Council's website to share information for BSL users • Ensure all BSL interpreted events, performances and information has the BSL symbol clearly visible all printed and digital media

3. Children, Young People and their Families

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people (CYP) can describe their needs, feelings and the strategies that help them be included and successful. They have trusted adults they can approach when they need help. • CYP enjoy meaningful friendships but there are times when further understanding and support would allow them to thrive in a wider range of social situations, both at school and in other clubs and organisations. • CYP enjoy coming together to share experiences, frustrations and positive elements of their deaf identity. Some want to build on this and lead deaf awareness training within their schools. • There is growing interest in BSL and deaf awareness within school communities but this must not be tokenistic and should lead to meaningful changes in the way others communicate with and support deaf children and young people. • Deaf learners and their families would like accessible opportunities to learn and make progress in BSL. All other learners should also have the chance to learn some BSL.
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a deaf or deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL. We will strengthen partnerships between relevant organisations to overcome barriers for BSL users and deaf/deafblind children to ensure they have the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential.</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and facilitate participation of teachers and other school-based staff in deaf awareness training where available • Seek to provide opportunities for education staff to engage in relevant training in BSL to support deaf and deafblind learners • Ensure parents, carers, children and young people are aware of pathways to accessing support and that education staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to refer to these as appropriate • Support the development of opportunities for deaf and deafblind children, young people, and their families to learn about the heritage and culture of BSL • Increase opportunities for children and young people that foster the development of a secure sense of identity, reduce loneliness and social isolation and increase visibility of deaf role models • Collaborate with Children & Young People to ensure health services are accessible and health & wellbeing information is provided in a timely and appropriate format. • Continue to ensure the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins our collective work

4. Access to Employment

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying for jobs can be tricky due to application process and having to write a CV in English, especially with services moving online • BSL users and employees aren't always fully informed about Access to Work programme and the process of applying for this can be complicated • Health and Safety at work can be a big concern, particularly in industries such as manufacturing and construction where deaf people cannot hear potential hazards • It's important that employers are aware of the value and skills BSL users can bring to an organisation and also understand adjustments may be needed to make the workplace accessible
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>BSL users will receive person-centred support to develop their skills, consider what route to employment is right for them and enter into the workforce so that they can fulfil their potential and improve Scotland's economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career.</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via the Local Employability Partnership groups we will work with partners who deliver employment services, and with employer groups already supporting employability to help signpost them to specific advice on the needs of BSL users. • Continue to work with Local Employability Disability providers including Enable, DWP Disability Employment Advisors and IncludeMe2 to ensure person centred approach to employment support. • Raise awareness locally via our partnership network, of the UK Government's 'Access to Work' (AtW) scheme with employers and with BSL users (including those on Modern Apprenticeships) so that they can benefit from the support it provides. • Continue to have transition plans for BSL users in place • Explore opportunities to improve access to Work EastRen and other employability support services available in the area for BSL users. • Have staff attend Deaf Awareness Training in order to improve our inclusive approach for BSL users (measure at least 3 people in the office with BSL awareness training) • Encourage anyone who uses BSL to join our Work EastRen lived experience panel. • We will develop links with young people (16+) who communicate in BSL through Education & Skills Development Scotland, so that they are aware of our offer and opportunities to engage with our service. • Work with our third sector to explore how we can improve access to volunteering opportunities for BSL users

5. Health and Wellbeing

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services moving online have created additional barriers for BSL users- face to face appointments are needed. A choice of in person interpreter should be offered as medical appointments can be complex and personal • Often professionals continue to phone even though BSL users can't communicate this way- the option to text is preferred but this isn't being recognised a lot of the time. Application forms should allow a space to indicate medical issues which could help flag preferred/needed method of communication • Appointments can be hard to get and need booked weeks in advance because an interpreter is required, there should be flexibility for BSL users in processes that health settings often have in place e.g phoning to book an appointment • Information around wellbeing supports could be better shared so that BSL users know what is happening • GP staff are first point of contact for different issues and signpost from there so they should be aware of needs, it's frustrating and disempowering having to constantly tell staff about issues or rely on family members to communicate • BSL users experience difficulties when trying to use gyms and fitness facilities, particularly with regards to correct use of equipment to meet fitness goals due to the lack of appropriate communication means with staff
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Public Health Scotland's Best Practice toolkit to GP Practice staff and share this via communication channels such as our GP forum • Aim to review paperwork to capture if a service user uses BSL & ensure preferred method of communication is recorded • Raise awareness with HSCP staff on ways to support BSL users and understand service responsibilities through training and information sharing • Ensure services are inclusive and accessible with a choice of options for BSL community to access health & wellbeing activities and services • Collaborate with Public Health Scotland to ensure health & social care information is in BSL and share this on our Council BSL webpage and social media • Liaise with interpreting services to ensure timely support and choice of interpreter where possible. • Introduce the offer of BSL interpreted gym inductions at ERCL gyms to support access to achieve fitness and wellbeing goals of individuals when requested • Offer BSL interpreted ERCL Live Active referral consultations to those who require them

6. Celebrating BSL Culture

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on community and cultural events is not made accessible to the BSL community and this means people are often excluded from participating. This can lead to loneliness and a lack of sense of belonging • Interpreted performances should be promoted more and in an appropriate way, as often BSL users aren't aware of such events and opportunities • It's important for young deaf people to be educated on deaf culture and BSL and be supported by people who share the same experiences • Libraries are viewed as a written space by BSL users therefore can be intimidating for those whose first or preferred language is BSL • There is an interest in the local heritage of East Renfrewshire, but BSL users are unsure how to access in person, and only do so online. This can mean that many are unaware of the resources and heritage collection available for them to view and engage with.
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>BSL users will have access to the cultural life of East Renfrewshire, active opportunities to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and deaf culture with other people in the area</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure's programme of BSL interpreted professional theatre performances, including a minimum of two BSL interpreted pantomime performances at Eastwood Park Theatre and promoting these in BSL through online videos. BSL icons will be clear on printed and digital promotional materials. • Continue the partnership work between ERCL and deaf theatre makers and organisations in the research, development and delivery of BSL performances and cultural and heritage events that represent BSL and deaf culture and provide an opportunity to share experiences with audiences • Explore opportunities for children and young people to foster greater visibility of deaf role models, the development of a secure sense of identity, and reduced loneliness and social isolation

7. BSL Data

We've been told...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looking at numbers such views on videos created will show what works and what doesn't• There is an uncertainty about how many BSL users there are in East Renfrewshire and how to connect with them
So our aim is...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To better understand the evidence and data on the BSL community in East Renfrewshire and use this to inform decision making and service planning that meets people's needs
To achieve this by 2030 we will...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use any data sources or recommendations that are published throughout the lifespan of this plan such as Census data or any information provided by Scottish Government to inform planning• Explore how we can better utilise local data around BSL (such as Education or Social Work) in our planning• Collect and report on participation figures from activities outlined in this plan (where appropriate)

8. Transport

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements or information about delays/changes to services can often be missed and be stressful and company apps don't offer much support • Needing to inform drivers of where you are going when scanning your bus pass is extremely undignified as you often feel like you need to use your voice which some people aren't comfortable with. Drivers can also be unhelpful and rude. • Bus pass application process is extremely clunky and difficult to navigate and it's frustrating having to 'prove deafness' every three years • Active transport and cycle lanes can be dangerous as deaf people can't hear cars or other hazards, same as when they are pedestrians and bikes are on pavements
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public and active transport and the systems that support transport use in East Renfrewshire</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders and local transport providers to ensure that travel information is visual, current, accessible and well-publicised for the benefit of BSL users. This may include increasing driver awareness regarding the needs of the BSL community • Ensure emerging transport plans consider reasonable adjustments that reflect the needs of BSL users to promote accessibility and encourage sustainable mobility options. This includes exploring the use of BSL in communications and engagement as part of future transport plan and behaviour change activity development

9. Access to Justice

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most experiences of the justice system is being called for jury duty, the process of opting out of this is straightforward and can be done online or by ticking a box and returning the letter • Some BSL users would like the option to participate in jury duty, however the offer of an interpreter in this setting is not being offered in Scotland yet
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<p>BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile systems in Scotland</p>
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that adequate BSL provision is available for BSL users through use of recognised intralingual professionals recognised by the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service • Identify and implement relevant improvement actions from the BSL-led Justice Advisory Group, with a view to meeting the needs of deaf and deafblind people in the field of Justice • Ensure that our on-line and printed materials encompassing Justice-related information for our services are accessible for BSL users who may require access

10. Democratic Participation

<p>We've been told...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be useful to have information about potential candidates in BSL rather than leaflets so more informed choices could be made about who to vote for • Councillors' surgeries and community meetings aren't accessible so BSL users wouldn't feel confident approaching local representatives or taking part in events • Polling stations can be a negative experience and more BSL awareness training for polling staff is needed
<p>So our aim is...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Scotland, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies
<p>To achieve this by 2030 we will...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Access to Elected Office Fund and other funds locally, including adding details of these funds to our Nomination Packs and discussing them with potential candidates and agents. These funds can help to cover the additional costs of BSL users standing for selection or election in UK, Scottish and Local Elections or By-Elections • Explore how the Access to Elected Office Fund can be used to boost BSL user participation in Community Councils. • Encourage young BSL users to take part in local democracy through initiatives like the Youth Voice programme. • Share the Electoral Commission's BSL guide on how to register to vote / voter ID requirements via ERC social media in the lead-up to any electoral event. • Collaborate with partners like the Improvement Service to explore advice, training and guidance available to Elected Members. • Provide access to BSL translators, where required, to ensure effective communication with elected members and participation in community engagement events. • Raise awareness through our Elected Member Training Programme on the use of ContactScotland, the online BSL interpreting service

What happens next?

East Renfrewshire Council will continue to work with BSL users to monitor and report on progress throughout the life of this plan. A mid-point report of our progress will be included as part of our Equalities Mainstreaming Report in 2027. This plan has been published in BSL with English subtitles and in written English and can be accessed at <https://eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/BSL>

The Council is set to face complex budget challenges over the coming years, so we will therefore need to make best use of both internal mainstream budgets as well as any available alternative funding sources to help us deliver on the actions outlined in this plan. We will work closely with our communities, third sector organisations and those with lived experience to drive forward the ambitions we have set out and improve the lives for people who use BSL in East Renfrewshire.

In addition to our local plan, NHSGCC have one that outlines actions for the region so we will continue to work closely with them throughout the lifespan of our plans to monitor progress and assess delivery.

If, at any time, you would like to comment on this BSL Plan then you can do so either by emailing in English or sending a video in BSL through WeTransfer to listening@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

We will continue working alongside the BSL community to develop/implement the actions set out in our plan, if you wish to be involved, please contact listening@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Lastly, a massive thank-you to all the members of the deaf community, including the children and young people, for your valuable involvement and for sharing your experiences. Your insights have been instrumental in shaping our plan and we are extremely grateful for your contributions.

