

Education and Culture Committee
British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill
SUMMARY OF BSL SUBMISSIONS

Introduction

The Education and Culture Committee invited individuals and organisations across Scotland to provide their views on the BSL Bill. Submissions were invited in English and BSL.

The submissions are published on the Scottish Parliament website: [Submissions received](#).

Content of this document

This document is a summary of the BSL video submissions received in response to the Committee's [Call for views](#) at Stage 1 of the BSL Bill. It is not a full transcription of the videos.

The document has been prepared under the Scottish Parliament contract for English/BSL translation.

Views on the BSL Bill

People also told us their views on the BSL Bill through the Scottish Parliament Facebook Group and during fact-finding visits. Further information is available on the Committee's webpage, which can be accessed here: [British Sign Language \(Scotland\) Bill](#).

All of these views informed the Committee's scrutiny of the BSL Bill and are reflected in its report, which can be accessed here: [Stage 1 Report](#).

Overall key themes

- The majority mentioned a need for more qualified interpreters – repeated references to interpreters not being available when needed.
- Interpreter training is very expensive. Training for families with deaf children varies considerably.
- Family members (frequently children) are often used as interpreters and this is not appropriate.
- There's a great need for improved access to interpreters to allow deaf people to interact with public services, especially in emergency settings.
- Those in public services (e.g. councils, NHS, police, fire brigade, social work, job centres, benefits offices, courts, schools, colleges) need to be more deaf aware and public services need to have more staff who know some BSL.
- There's strong support for raising the minimum BSL qualification level required by communication support workers and teachers of the deaf from level 1. (Usually level 3 is mentioned as the minimum.)
- Deaf people face particular problems in employment – support needed in job centres, applying and being interviewed, as well as in work situation. Workers repeatedly mentioned feeling isolated, being bullied or experiencing limits on opportunities.
- Many respondents want BSL to be taught in schools and to be a subject in which pupils (both deaf and hearing) can gain qualifications.
- The specific needs of deafblind people need to be recognised by the bill.
- Repeated calls for Deaf people to have equality with hearing people.

Dingwall Academy pupils [15 videos]

- Number who would like to see BSL treated equally with other languages – 3
- Number who would like to see a BSL as a qualification – 6
- Number who feel it is important to learn/communicate with deaf people – 5
- Number who feel it is important to learn through BSL – 2

Deaf Connections [10 videos]

1	<p>Andrea Paterson (Glasgow) Parking fine in carpark – would like to see ‘wardens’ being able to sign/communicate with deaf people – the fine office had someone who could sign.</p>	<p>Issues communicating with public services</p>
2	<p>Grahame Sinclair (Glasgow) Difficulty in communication with ambulance staff – questions put through use of his own daughter (not a qualified interpreter) which was uncomfortable for her – taken to hospital, daughter still being used as interpreter – Staff should know how and where to get BSL/English interpreters</p> <p>For planned/routine health appointments as well as emergency settings</p>	<p>Communication in health settings – need for qualified interpreters for health, police, fire, etc., especially for emergency settings</p>
3	<p>Grahame Sinclair (Glasgow) Communication breakdown with GP Use of interpreter in medical settings is not only of benefit to deaf people but to the health professional as well.</p> <p>Use of interpreters in all situations emergency and non-emergency – the BSL Bill should promote this through ‘civil’ life</p> <p>Family/social situations – deaf people should be given opportunity to learn BSL from school age</p>	<p>Communication with GP services</p> <p>Right to access all services with use of an interpreter</p> <p>Access to BSL learning for both deaf and hearing people at secondary school</p>
4	<p>Jan Cuthbert (Glasgow) Employed with Glasgow City Council for over 30 years – pay grade remained the same and felt there were no opportunities for promotion offered.</p> <p>BSL Bill hopefully will raise the awareness of deaf people’s abilities and equal pay.</p>	<p>Limits on career development</p> <p>Employers (council and others) not aware of communication needs/or deaf aware</p>
5	<p>Jane Brown (Kilbirnie, near Largs) Communication via social work to make an emergency appointment at hospital with interpreter.</p> <p>Problems making arrangements without clear communication</p>	<p>Deaf people should have the same access to services as others when it comes to emergency appointments.</p>

		Issues with the waiting times for interpreters.
6	<p>J Robertson (Glasgow) Attended social work (VI) for over 10 years and gave up as no support – social work services need to improve.</p> <p>Need for fully qualified interpreters</p>	<p>Social work services for deaf people need to improve, including ability to communicate.</p> <p>Need for more fully qualified interpreters</p>
7	<p>Lynda Boyle (Glasgow) Daughter who works for DSS was asked by other deaf person (when in office) to help as she knew she could communicate but not fully All Benefits staff should be deaf aware and have the ability to sign</p> <p>Communication with grandchildren (I look after them some days a week) – all children should have access to learning BSL which would boost confidence of both child and adult.</p> <p>Police treatment of deaf son – communication when handcuffed was impossible</p>	<p>Benefit Office staff to be deaf aware and able to communicate with deaf people</p> <p>All schools should teach sign language so children can communicate with family</p> <p>Police need awareness and ability to sign/communicate with deaf people.</p>
8	<p>Nat Colmer (Irvine) Access to social work is only once every 5 days – should be everyday</p>	Better access to social work services for deaf people
9	<p>Sylvia Gourley (Paisley) Experience of applying for new passport was very good as passport office staff could sign/communicate – making process easy.</p> <p>All other services should be the same.</p>	<p>Passport office staff ability to communicate with deaf people gives confidence. Should be the same in all public life</p>
10	<p>Wendy Galloway (Glasgow) Job Centre appointment at very short notice (knew that interpreters were short due to holidays). Job Centre staff had some sign skills which helped a great deal.</p>	All public offices such as job centres should have staff who can communicate with deaf people

British Deaf Association [10 videos]

[We received requests to remove 24 videos from our website, which accounts for the gaps in the numbering of the submissions]

0	<p>Tommy Ross (Glasgow) Interpreter had to be booked for a school event – unable to source interpreter as fully booked so unable to follow school play. Should have booked interpreter well in advance</p> <p>Schools should employ deaf teachers and deaf people in other staff roles</p> <p>Children should have access to BSL on the curriculum</p>	<p>Booking of interpreters should be timely</p> <p>Employment of deaf people as role models</p> <p>BSL on the curriculum</p>
1	<p>Moira Ross (Glasgow) Question No5 – Education Experience of learning while at deaf school was a struggle because of the language barriers – teachers were using signed English but still a barrier. Educational attainment would improve if native BSL users were used.</p> <p>Level of qualifications of educators (primary school) should be level 3 at least but needs to be higher then deaf people would learn rather than struggle with language differences.</p> <p>Learning BSL at an early age would benefit both deaf and hearing children in the acquisition of speech/language</p>	<p>Deaf children should learn through native users of the language in education</p> <p>Learning BSL at an early age would benefit both deaf and hearing children in the acquisition of speech/language</p>
2	<p>Russell Ross (Glasgow) (with mother) Question No5 – Education BSL should be the equal to English</p> <p>Having access to BSL/Being taught BSL at an early age will help development of English</p> <p>The BSL Bill would be positive in all areas of life – nothing negative.</p> <p>Acceptance of BSL as a language would reduce bullying and stigma attached to BSL users.</p>	<p>BSL should be treated the same as other spoken languages and be available as a qualification (meant)</p> <p>BSL Bill would have no negative effects.</p> <p>Wider availability of BSL learning would have positive effect on the lives of Deaf people</p>
4	<p>Graham Dow (Paisley) Question No5 – Education</p> <p>Been involved in all levels of education (school, college, university) and had to fight for interpreters, notetakers etc – interpreters were of the highest importance – booking/provision never improved over years</p>	<p>Provision of BSL interpreters should be automatic for students as a necessity.</p> <p>Need for academic staff to be deaf aware.</p>
5	<p>No name given More training for BSL Interpreters needed</p> <p>Use of ‘daughter’ as an interpreter in a very sensitive medical situation (organ transplant request) – need more interpreters.</p>	<p>Need for more interpreters – deaf people should have equal rights</p>

6	<p>Brian McCann – Deaf parent of deaf children (East Kilbride) Felt that education has always been a problem throughout his life – now married with 5 children.</p> <p>Education problem seems to be the same for his children as in his own experience, if not worse</p>	<p>Level of BSL skills of teaching and support worker staff is not of sufficient standard</p> <p>BSL Bill must address this issue and work with Deaf people to raise the standards of communication skills and children’s attainment</p>
8	<p>Laura Lyons Ross (Glasgow) Deaf person from a hearing family originally from south Scotland within a farming community – communication was difficult and went to deaf school</p> <p>Now with 3 hearing children – when she goes to school with/for them it’s suggested she use them to interpret, which is inappropriate. Wants a qualified interpreter brought in as a right</p>	<p>Use of children as interpreters is inappropriate</p>
9	<p>Scott Campbell (Glasgow) With deaf schools closing and mainstream education becoming the more frequent route, deaf identity is being lost.</p> <p>The NHS is a big issue – health staff are unaware of procedures/needs</p>	<p>BSL Bill should promote deaf culture and identity</p> <p>Need for more deaf awareness in NHS</p>
12	<p>Frank Thompson (Deafblind) Grew up deaf using BSL</p> <p>Important that the BSL Bill includes deafblind people as many deafblind people use BSL before becoming deafblind</p>	<p>BSL Bill must include deafblind people who use BSL</p>
13	<p>Dominic Ravenscroft (Inverness) His first language is BSL – hopes the BSL Bill will be passed. It has to include employment for deaf people as the number of deaf people who are not working in comparison to hearing people is far greater.</p>	<p>BSL Bill must address employment issues that Deaf people face to bring about skills and equality</p>