



# NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde British Sign Language (BSL) Action Plan 2024-30

**May 2024**

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## **Foreword**

I am very pleased to present NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde's British Sign Language Action Plan 2024 – 2030. This Action Plan forms part of the organisation's wider work on Equality & Human Rights and reflects our commitment to providing fair and equitable services for all.

Produced in response to the British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015, this document aligns with the Scottish Government's National Plan, 2023 - 2029.

This programme of work has been built on a long term commitment to meeting the needs of BSL users in NHSGGC.

We are already involved in a range of activities to help raise awareness of BSL as a language and culture and to make sure our patients have access to BSL interpreting whenever they need it. These include -

- A development to our Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) service whereby all wards and unplanned services have access via tablets to remote BSL interpreters. The interpreter is accessed via a visual screen. This is ideal for accessing A&E services in an emergency.
- Continuation of our established BSL Mediator to offer a BSL direct route to feedback and complaints for BSL users
- Increased opportunities for staff to learn basic BSL, to help with social conversations and reassurance for BSL users and to promote understanding of the importance of BSL as a language in its own right.
- Development of a BSL Counselling service within Lifelink which has continued to offer direct access to mental health support to BSL users.
- Continuation of the relationship between NHSGGC and Deafblind Scotland.

Our programme of BSL work is based on a long standing relationship with the Deaf BSL community, established through engagement and through our BSL Champions. We are grateful for the involvement of our BSL users and Champions to help drive this work programme. The action plan outlined in this document will also be subject to continued consultation to ensure we provide the best service possible for our Deaf BSL patients.

We look forward to delivering the range of actions within this BSL Plan with colleagues across NHSGGC, illustrating our continued commitment to the empowerment of our Deaf and Deafblind community.

**Jane Grant**

**Chief Executive, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde**

## **1. Introduction to the British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act**

1.1 The British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Ministers to ensure that public authorities facilitate the promotion of the use and understanding of British Sign Language (BSL) within their area of responsibility. Public bodies such as NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) are required to prepare a plan which:

- sets out measures to facilitate the promotion and understanding of BSL
- sets out timescales for this work
- is as consistent as possible with the National Plan.

1.2 The Scottish Government's second National Plan was published in November 2023. Public bodies are required to have in place their own BSL Plan within 6 months of this date.

The organisation must also:

- publish a draft plan and consult on it with BSL users<sup>1</sup>
- ensure the consultation is accessible to Deafblind people
- take into account representations arising from the consultation in the final plan.

### **Background**

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde has the highest number of Deaf BSL users in Scotland. Currently this is estimated at 3,600 people (2011 Census).

In devising our BSL Action Plan 2024-30, NHSGGC reviewed its previous learning and engagement. Key developments that have been in place since 2020 can be found in Appendix 1. In summary, these include the development of:

- a Health Improvement Post with specialism in Deafness and Mental Health within the Equality & Human Rights Team (EHRT) to drive the BSL Act – this is a shared post with Glasgow City HSCP.
- a BSL Mediator role as sessional support to the Deaf community
- BSL Champions who volunteer to advise and secret shop
- BSL classes for staff
- iPads in all unplanned services to augment the Virtual Visiting iPads in all NHSGGC wards, to provide an online BSL service 24 / 7, 365 days of the year to complement face to face interpreting provision
- public engagement with the Deaf community as a rolling programme
- staff training, both reactive and proactive.

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<sup>1</sup> Whenever we refer to 'BSL users' we mean D/deaf and /or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language

- awareness posters in all Acute wards to contact the Equality and Human Rights Team if they have a BSL user in the ward, to ensure compliance with the Interpreting and Communication Support Policy
- a BSL Short-Life Working Group (SLWG) to optimise BSL provision within NHSGGC acute and mental health inpatient services.

These developments will continue to form part of our BSL Act actions for 2024-30 in addition to new actions identified.

## **2. Consultation with British Sign Language Users, Deafblind people and NHSGGC Staff**

### **2.1 BSL Users**

Our programme of ongoing engagement with BSL users in our local communities ensures that we have a continuous feedback on how NHSGGC services are meeting the needs of BSL users. This public engagement programme and specific consultation with services and staff is carried out in collaboration with Acute Services and HSCP colleagues across NHSGGC. Engagement on our 2024 -30 BSL Act Action Plan has led to an action plan, co-produced by BSL service users, Acute and HSCP services and NHSGGC's Equality and Human Rights Team.

The continuous engagement with BSL users informs both the BSL Act Action Plan and the Fairer NHSGGC Equality Scheme. Since April 2022, in the post Covid – 19 period, engagement has been carried out with 194 BSL users. This engagement highlighted that there is a need for:

- clearer indication of interpreting needs on patients' records to guarantee provision of interpreting support when required
- improved access to Mental Health services and information about services
- staff training to include the impact of staff assumptions regarding Deaf BSL users.
- action to be taken for Deaf people who do not have BSL / English as a first language, but have either another form of sign language or only family gestures, for example some asylum seekers

Between January and March 2024, engagement was specifically carried out on the 2024-30 BSL Action Plan potential actions.

Sixty seven BSL users attended events co-ordinated by the British Deaf Association (BDA). The events were organised for Inverclyde and Glasgow city. A meeting was also held with Deaf people at the Scottish Ethnic Minority Deaf Club.

Additionally, NHSGGC held separate events with Deaf people from East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire. Nineteen people attended.

Details of the feedback is listed below.

- All Deaf people should know that NHS Inform offers extensive BSL content, and NHSGGC provides free health translation services.
- Families should be directed to the National Deaf Children's Society upon diagnosis of Deaf children.
- Clinical diagnoses for both children and adults should be documented on their patient record to ensure access to appropriate services.
- Health visitors should receive BSL training when working with Deaf people.
- Challenges persist across NHSGGC regarding interpreter bookings and staff awareness of when and how to book BSL interpreters.

- Staff should ensure they provide BSL users with sufficient time to receive and understand information fully when they are using an interpreter.
- Older Deaf people prefer receiving information personally from other Deaf people rather than accessing information online.
- Many BSL users whose first language is not English struggle with reading letters. They would greatly benefit translations into their preferred language and would appreciate having a video explaining how they can request this.
- Non BSL / English users would like the option to choose between spoken language interpreters and international sign language interpreters for their appointments as their preference is for the latter.

Our specific engagement on the NHSGGC BSL Act Action Plan 2024 - 30 also focussed on using interactive engagement building on the face to face engagement above.

We met with the BSL Champions to understand and record their view on the draft NHSGGC BSL Act Action Plan.

We also used the NHSGGC BSL Facebook page to engage with a wider group of BSL users on the planned actions. This resulted in feedback from 3 BSL users.

The themes arising from this engagement were:

- The need to raise awareness of Contact Scotland for NHS staff to call BSL users
- Staff knowledge of booking interpreters should be assessed by a survey
- the need to demonstrate evidence that last BSL (Scotland) Act action plan was implemented
- NHSGGC should aim to recruit more BSL users into the workforce
- NHSGGC should monitoring the provision of BSL interpreters.

Feedback from BSL users have been taken into account in the development of the NHSGGC BSL Act 2024 – 20230 Action Plan.

## 2.2 Deafblind People

NHSGGC has a contract with Deafblind Scotland to support gathering information on access issues for Deafblind people, as well as to provide Guide Communication support. From this engagement, both ongoing and specific to the BSL Act Action Plan 24 – 30, Deafblind people fed back that:

- there were poor attitudes and lack of awareness from staff on deafness and the support needs of people with a dual-sensory impairment.

- the information on patients' records about their communication support needs to be reviewed it's not always right or acted upon
- in terms of Person Centred Care, the needs of Deafblind people should be taken into account by staff
- clearer information is required from specific services.

Specific feedback relating to NHSGGCs BSL Act Action Plan covered the following issues:

- There are concerns about technical issues relating to Contact Scotland as well as available information in formats for Deafblind people to utilise
- For children and families to have access to BSL there would need to be continued improvement in screening, including but also importantly for Usher's Syndrome
- There is still a need for more awareness of the requirements of Deafblind people amongst health professionals and all NHS staff working with the public.
- There needs to be an alert on NHS appointments system regarding the individual communication support needs for each patient
- We must ensure that Mental Health service have those with dual sensory impairment identified on their records.

Feedback from Deafblind people have been taken into account in the development of this NHSGGC BSL Act 2024 – 20230 Action Plan.

### 2.3 NHSGGC Staff

As part of preparation for the 2024-2030 Action Plan the following staff groups were consulted: Children's services; Family Nurse Practitioners; Health Visitors, Health Improvement and Adult and Paediatric Audiology.

Two specific groups which drive improvement related to BSL users in NHSGGC - the BSL SWLG and the Deafness and Mental Health group - were also involved in developing the actions in this plan. Details of these groups are below.

#### **BSL Short Life Working Group**

The BSL SLWG was set up to:

- identify systems that can aid the understanding of size and pattern of unmet need for BSL users in NHSGGC
- ensure failsafe system for consistent recording of BSL status on healthcare record to ensure staff see this at an appropriate time



- improve staff knowledge of BSL users' need for interpreting support and establish a failsafe mechanism so all BSL users have interpreters integral to their care
- enable Deaf people to feed back their experience of our services directly back to clinical staff and be able to make a complaint
- access to health and clinical information.

## **Staff Survey**

A Fairer NHS GGC Staff Survey 2023 provided an opportunity to engage with staff on the equality and human rights agenda in NHS GGC. While there is no legal requirement to run the survey under the Equality Act 2010, the ambition has been to undertake one survey per reporting period to measure changes and inform any new mainstreaming and equality outcomes. There were 811 responses to the survey, approximately 2% of the total workforce (n=42,000).

59% of staff reported always booking a BSL interpreter for every clinical encounter. Staff fed back that there was a need for more Deaf Awareness Training and more robust ability to meet BSL users' needs by knowing these in advance of a clinical encounter.

## **Deafness and Mental Health Group**

The Deafness and Mental Health Group had a specific meeting to focus on the actions for the BSL Act Action plan. Discussions focussed on the following issues.

- Staff agreed there was a need for the Peer Support worker to help staff meet the needs of BSL users in our Mental Health Services.
- Staff in Mental Health hospitals are not always booking BSL interpreters for patients - feedback was raised by the National Mental Health Service for BSL users.
- New public communication is needed for the BSL-specific service at Lifelink
- Staff are keen to have BSL classes across HSCP sites
- Staff facing information about BSL users needs should be reviewed and acted upon.

## **2.4 Future Consultation**

Given the BSL Act (2015) Action Plan 2024 - 2030 will run over a 6 year period, NHS GGC is committed to reviewing and consulting again with BSL users, Deafblind people and NHS GGC staff in 2026 – 2027 to specifically refresh the Action Plan and promote further consideration of the issues.

## **NHSGGC BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE ACTION PLAN 2024 – 2030**

This is the NHSGGC BSL Act (2015) Action Plan 2024 – 2030. The actions have been agreed with all HSCPs in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.

Glasgow City HSCP (GCHSCP) and NHSGGC have worked in partnership to develop this overarching plan as there are currently approximately 1,717 active users of BSL in Glasgow City, according to the last Census in 2011, accounting for nearly half of the BSL users in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.

NHSGGC and GCHSCP share a post – Health Improvement Officer (Deafness and Mental Health) to drive the BSL Act Action Plan across both NHSGGC staff and GCHSCP staff.

### **NHSGGC Improvement Actions**

#### **1. BSL Accessibility**

**Action 1:** Improve accessibility of the NHSGGC website for BSL users. Local patient facing information will be made available to BSL using patients in our services and augment nationally produced health resources.

By:

#### **2026**

We will have continued to translate NHSGGC core corporate communications for the general population into BSL and disseminate on the NHSGGC BSL Champions Facebook page.

We will revisit our NHSGGC glossary and information strategy for Deaf people through translations and utilise the evidence from BSL users to inform our response to the Scottish Government's new Inclusive Communication Duty due April 2025

We will increase awareness of the BSL Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) through a promotions campaign within the BSL community and across primary care (GCHSCP)

#### **2028**

We will promote the co-design of GCHSCP website and social media platforms with BSL user by incorporating BSL videos. (GCHSCP)

**Action 2:** Continue to promote the use of Contact Scotland BSL, Scotland's BSL online interpreting Video Relay Service (VRS), making improvements to this service to ensure it meets the needs of BSL users.

By:

**2026**

We will lead a campaign to promote the use of Contact Scotland BSL service and review effectiveness of this campaign with NHSGGC staff.

**2028:**

We will explore whether this campaign should run again, as staff awareness can dissipate over time

## **2. Children, Young People and their Families**

**Action 3:** Facilitate the building of partnerships and effective working relationships between NHSGGC teams and our in-house interpreters and BSL interpreting agencies. This will help to ensure that Deaf and Deafblind children and their families can access the right support from the earliest stages of childhood and in doing so we can strive to get it right for every child.

By:

**2026**

NHSGGC Interpreting Service will initiate work with Paediatric Audiology, Speech and Language Therapy and Health Visiting to review current reach to children who are BSL users

We will develop a signposting resource for parents of newly diagnosed Deaf children, including access to BSL for babies and children, to ensure parents and families of Deaf and Deafblind children receive information, guidance and support and access to activities to help development, learning and wellbeing. (GCHSCP & NHSGGC)

**2028**

NHSGGC Interpreting Service will assess with Paediatric Audiology, Speech and Language Therapy and Health Visiting across partner HSCPs if the 2024 - 26 improvement plan was effective.

We will raise awareness of Paediatric Audiology referral pathways with Community Health Services in Acute. (GCHSCP & NHSGGC)

We will ensure that Audiology referral pathways into Acute services is understood by Community Health Service Teams

**Action 4:** Work with representative groups across Midwifery, Health Visiting, Family Nurse Partnership, Allied Health Professionals and Audiology to help them understand the importance of BSL provision on child and family wellbeing.

By:

**2026**

We will work with Acute staff on a staff awareness plan about the importance of BSL provision on child and family wellbeing.

**2028**

We will assess the effectiveness of our staff awareness plan about the importance of BSL provision on child and family wellbeing

We will increase awareness of adaptations available for Deaf parents of babies.  
(GCHSCP)

### **3. Access to Employment**

**Action 5** – Ensure our employability activity is accessible to BSL users internally and with our partners.

By:

**2026:**

Development and implementation of a wide ranging strategy for employing young people and other under-represented groups including BSL users within the workforce in partnership with NHSGGC service managers.

Development of new pathways into employment for 16-24 year olds, in partnership with NHSGGC services and external stakeholders, with provision for under-represented groups with specific barriers to employment including BSL users.

Promote employment opportunities with Deaf People and support availability of Interpreters through the Access to Work Fund. (GCHSCP & NHSGGC)

### **4. Health and Wellbeing**

**Action 6:** Consider the needs of those who are Deaf and Deafblind in our response to the Independent Review of Audiology Services in Scotland, published in August 2023.

By:

**2026:**

We will review the experience of Deaf and Deafblind patients in Adult Audiology through patient engagement with Adult Audiology (supported by EHRT).

**Action 7:** Develop health as a priority theme within this Plan's implementation, utilising the BSL SLWG to explore barriers around access and progress continuous improvement actions to mitigate and resolve issues identified

By:

**2026:**

We will develop a Dashboard to track BSL users throughout their journey in Acute wards to ensure a failsafe system for providing BSL interpreters to support communication needs

We will develop a consistent recording of BSL status on healthcare records to ensure staff see this at an appropriate time and action.

We will identify and remove barriers with GP colleagues to the full information being contained within the referral of a BSL user to Acute services.

We will create a governance route to provide oversight and assurance that issues arising through feedback and complaints processes have been appropriately actioned.

We will implement ward level Standard Operating Procedure and documentation which will be included in the Therapeutics Handbook / Induction packs and utilise Rota Watch to ensure all staff understand the protocol attached to how and when they book interpreters for BSL users in a ward.

We will utilise the Frontline Equality Assessment Tool (FEAT) to assess staff compliance with BSL Standard Operating Procedure.

We will work with NHSGGC Complaints to make sure the system is accessible to BSL users, including production of an updated complaints leaflet in BSL.

We will progress a communications plan to promote Deaf people downloading the Video Remote Interpreting app on their own phone as a failsafe for staff not booking interpreters.

Ensure that all third sector organisation who work with Deaf and Deafblind people know how NHSGGC Interpreting Services work and how to troubleshoot issues.

**By 2028:**

We will develop a Staff app on the Right Decision platform populated with the standard operating procedure for BSL users.

We will utilise the NHSGGC BSL Champions to test improvement in our systems through a secret shopper programme.

We will review the use of online interpreting in Acute wards.

**By 2030:**

We will assess the effectiveness of our health work streams in preparation for a BSL Action Plan 2030/36

**Action 8:** Work with our partners to implement and measure the Scottish Government Core Mental Health Standards. This will include a focus on ensuring information and services are accessible to all individuals, including those who use BSL.

By:

**2026**

Building on our NHSGGC Deaf and Mental Health Group Action Plan, we will commit to rolling out the findings of the review of psychological therapies for BSL users, review the evidence base of mental health and BSL, produce an information strategy for BSL users and review the role and funding of the Mental Health Peer Support worker.

We will audit patient information on diagnostic material and Mental Health Services and update staff and patient resources to fill any identified gaps

We will review BSL support information that is available for staff and identify any development needs (GCHSCP)

We will explore data capture options on patients' medical notes system in Mental Health, including capturing BSL Interpreter needs (GCHSCP)

We will continue to raise awareness of the commissioned Lifelink Counselling Service with Deaf BSL Users, including access to a Counsellor who uses BSL (GCHSCP)

**2028:**

A review of NHSGGC-wide BSL Short Life Working Group Action for Mental Health plan will be conducted

**Action 9:** In line with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan, we will improve equality, inclusion and diversity training for the mental health and wellbeing workforce, including promotion of existing BSL training.

By:

**2026:**

BSL training for mental health staff will be available via our NHSGGC Workforce Equality Group action plan and linked to the patient file to prompt staff.

**2028:**

We will review equality, inclusion and diversity training for the mental health and wellbeing workforce in our HSCPs including the promotion of existing BSL training.

**2030:**

We will assess the impact of improvements on our equality, inclusion and diversity training for the mental health and wellbeing workforce in our HSCPs, including the promotion of existing BSL training.

**Action 10:** Build on the work set out within the social isolation and loneliness strategy, 'Recovering our Connections 2023-26', to embed actions related to BSL users and link with existing work at a local and national level to address issues of social isolation and loneliness, including access to services and projects.

By:

**2026:**

We will develop and support a targeted BSL campaign as part of Loneliness Awareness week, beginning 2025. (GCHSCP)

We will actively promote access to funding linked to tackling social isolation and loneliness to BSL organisations and take steps to a more accessible funding application process. (GCHSCP)

**2028:**

We will raise awareness with staff on the impacts of social isolation and loneliness on Deaf BSL users to support access to services and programmes. (GCHSCP)

## **5. Democratic Participation**

**Action 11:** Ensure BSL users can be involved in public life, as active and informed citizens such as board members of NHS public bodies.

By:

**2026:**

Take opportunities to promote public appointments to NHSGGC's board to BSL users through targeting Deaf organisations and producing a BSL version of the advert.

## Appendix 1

### Actions carried out as part of the NHSGGC BSL Act Action Plan 2017 – 2023

NHSGGC, working with GHSCP, delivered a substantial programme of work over the life of the 2017 – 2023 BSL Act Action Plan. Below are highlights of this activity.

#### BSL Interpreting Provision

An updated policy on working with face to face interpreter and online interpreters was completed in 2021. This involved workshops with key members of the Deaf community / BSL users on their views of the changing landscape of online and face to face interpreting. NHSGGC had been using chrome books as a means of providing online interpreting since 2017. This changed with the purchase of 300 iPads and their implementation in 2022. The devices are uploaded with communication apps such as Signvideo (VRI) Contact Scotland (VRS) Ava (Speech to text app) and 999 BSL (Emergency Services). A video demonstration is available online for staff to view.

NHSGGC is continually promoting the use of online interpreting services through staff bulletins, the website, presentations and training. These are –

- **VRI – (Video Remote Interpreting)** The Deaf person and hearing person are in the same location while the interpreter is in another location. The interpreter is accessed via a visual screen. This is ideal for accessing A&E services in an emergency. NHSGGC have a contract with Signvideo app to provide VRI service under the directory name
- **VRS- (Video Relay Service)** The Interpreter, Deaf person and hearing person are all in different locations. The hearing person uses a standard telephone while the Deaf individual uses a visual screen. This is ideal to book a GP appointment. VRS is not appropriate for a medical consultation or mental health assessment. An example of a VRS is Contact Scotland, which enables BSL users to contact NHSGGC medical services to book an appointment or notify staff to book BSL Interpreters. Staff can also call BSL users using the phone to notify any changes regarding their appointment.

Staff training on how to use the communication app is ongoing throughout the year. The BSL Health Champions role is to monitor online interpreting as a secret shopper across NHSGGC sites. The Champions also supports the translation of health information to the Health Glossary online and helps to foster relations between NHSGGC and Deaf community.

Provision of online BSL interpreting services show trends indicating a substantial increase in usage over the last four years. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on these numbers.



Over the two year period 2020 to 2022, 182 calls were made using NHSGGC remote devices, amounting to 2,945 minutes of communication support (just under 50 hours). Of these, 394 minutes (over 6 hours) were out of hours' usage.

For 2022 – 2023, the total number of online minutes utilised by Deaf patients was 5,634; for the same period in 2023 – 24 it was 5,824. In total this is approximately 191 hours of online interpreting over this two year period, a substantial increase on the preceding two years.

## **BSL Translations**

BSL translations are available on the NHSGGC YouTube channel and NHSGGC BSL Health Champions Facebook page. On average, we have 25 BSL translations produced per annum, with each video averaging 150 views. Some of the translations are specifically requested by the Deaf community and others were COVID-19 related announcements by NHSGGC. NHSGGC is continuing to improve staff awareness of the importance of providing BSL translations of patient facing information. NHSGGC is committed to involving Deaf BSL translators and leaders of Deaf organisations in this work.

During the pandemic, BSL translations of COVID-19 were delivered online via social media channels, the NHSGGC website and You Tube Channels. BSL translations were acquired via QR codes on paper leaflets. There were specific online staff sessions (22 sessions delivered to a total of 141 staff on Basic Sign Language and Remote interpreting (Contact Scotland and NHSGGC VRI Interpreting service). Accessibility was a key issue during the pandemic, affected by lack of face to face consultation and the use of facemasks. In 2022-23, 12 visits were made to 'Deaf spaces' where Deaf people could meet socially, involving 248 people. These involved presentations on the actions NHSGGC was taking to support the Deaf community and providing updated information on interpreting services and the new patient support iPads containing communication apps. One to one interviews were also conducted to hear the concerns of Deaf BSL users regarding their hospital visits during the pandemic.

## **BSL Mediator**

The number of contacts with the BSL Mediator has shown a significant increase over time. From September 2021 to August 2022, there were 324 contacts, which rose to 589 contacts from September 2022 to August 2023. For April 2023 – end January 2024 there were 674 contacts with the BSL Mediator. In total, from September 2022 to January 2024, 1,587 contacts were made with our BSL Mediator.

The Mediator plays a crucial role in ensuring that Deaf individuals have access to BSL interpreters for appointments across various healthcare services. Additionally, the availability of feedback and a complaints mechanism underscores NHSGGC's commitment to improving accessibility for BSL users within the healthcare system.

## Staff training

Post Covid – 19 we have seen a significant increase in demand for face-to-face Deaf and BSL awareness training. From October 2021 to 2022, 22 Deaf Awareness Training sessions were delivered, with 141 participants.

From October 2022 to October 2023, 23 sessions were delivered, with 453 participants taking part. Most of this training was through Acute Nursing staff 'Lunch and Learn' sessions.

From November 2023 to February 2024, 120 participants attended Deaf Awareness Training either online or face to face.

In total, 714 NHS staff from both Acute wards and community services had Deaf Awareness Training over this time period.

## BSL Classes

BSL classes were re-established for the first time since 2019, following the challenges posed by COVID-19. 10 classes are now held across 6 hospital locations, accommodating a maximum of 14 students in each class. The classes span 6 weeks. Evaluation has revealed highly positive feedback from participants. Notably, participants recognised the course's positive influence on patient care and communication within healthcare settings.

E-learning materials on working with Deaf patients and working with BSL interpreters are regularly updated

## Service focus – Mental Health Services

Access to the mental health services pathway is a key priority for BSL users. The NHSGGC five year strategy for adult mental health ensures it takes account of the needs of BSL users. A key focus is to implement plans to improve mental health services for the Deaf community and BSL users, including enhanced support for self-care and positive mental health well-being as well as improved early intervention support and increased access to mental health care. This also involves exploring the role of advocates in mental health appointments with BSL users. Specific work streams are:

- **Improving BSL users' knowledge and reducing stigma of mental health:** A range of films were developed, which evaluated extremely well and are used regularly with BSL users. See [Positive Signs](#), [NHSGGC Mental Health Website : Heads up](#) and a [Mental Health Glossary in BSL](#) (updated regularly).
- **BSL Counselling service:** A counselling project for Deaf people was established in 2021 and is provided by Lifelink. 76% of Deaf people who use this service complete the course with high positive evaluations. To ensure easy access for BSL users their [website](#) was made accessible. This service went

online during the pandemic, in which 92 online sessions were completed. Lifelink continue to promote the Lifelink online counselling initiative with an ongoing marketing campaign via social media and working with external partner agencies such as Scottish Mental Health for Deaf people and Deaf organisations. The service is advertised in BSL. The campaign released two videos. The first involves a first-hand account from a previous service user and the second an animation explaining the process of the counselling service with a BSL translation.

- **Peer support:** A peer support worker who is Deaf and a BSL user was appointed in March 2020. The post holder works closely with NHSGGC Mental Health Services, Lifelink and the Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf people
- **Mental health crisis:** Work was undertaken with mental health crisis teams to ensure BSL users can utilise Contact Scotland or appropriate communication methods and encouraging service users to register Contact Scotland services
- **Review access routes to psychological therapies:** There is a dearth of literature on psychological therapies that is suitable for BSL users. Two principal clinical psychologists have achieved funding, from 2023, for research to explore different psychological therapies that are fully accessible and achieve healthy outcomes for BSL users. Alongside this, an online professional study was uploaded to the social media platforms of a Deaf trainee psychologist demonstrating a mock case study with a BSL user. The report will be available in Summer 2024.
- **Promote the patient access app to the Deaf community to enable them to make GP appointments by booking online:** In 2020, the video was released via the BSL champion webpage with ongoing positive feedback from the Deaf community praising how accessible it is to book an appointment online.
- **Improve links and communication with Glasgow City Council and NHSGGC to continue to signpost families to appropriate agencies for sign language support through Early Years Multi-disciplinary clinic and the Early Years new referral clinics:** Information sessions were provided to 320 Health Visitors and Family Nurses, Glasgow City Wide in 2021. 95% of attendees have found the course very useful and relevant to their work and acquired better knowledge of working with families who are Deaf and signposting appropriate services for Deaf children. There is ongoing work with families and relevant partners, including specialist speech and language therapists and allied health professionals for an all-inclusive plan for Deaf children.
- **Poverty:** Work was undertaken to encourage staff across HSCP's services to refer to Money Advice and Welfare Rights services that are accessible to BSL users.

## **Service focus - Acute Services**

In 2023, an Acute Services BSL Short Life Working Group was formed with the following key objectives:

- Identify Systems for Assessing Unmet BSL Interpreter Needs.
- Establish a Failsafe Recording System for BSL Status.

These objectives are pivotal in enhancing the provision of BSL interpreter services within NHSGGC and improving the overall healthcare experience for BSL users and the Deaf community. A collaborative effort is underway, involving staff members from various departments, including Interpreting Services, the Equality and Human Rights team, E-Health (computer technology), Healthcare Records, the Digital Clinical Notes team and Chief Nurses. Together, they are working towards achieving specific objectives outlined in a series of themed meetings.

Progress includes identification of unmet needs, devising an action plan from March 2024 and staff and public engagement. In their initial meetings, the group engaged with several Deaf BSL users to discuss their healthcare experiences and uncover unmet needs related to BSL interpreters. These discussions will continue through to Summer 2024 and has formed the basis of the action NHSGGC have committed to in the BSL Act Action Plan 2024 – 2030.

## Appendix 2

### BSL Act Glossary of Terms

#### **Acute Services**

This can include treatment for a severe injury, period of illness, urgent medical condition or to recover from surgery. In the NHS, it often includes services such as accident and emergency (A&E) departments, inpatient and outpatient treatment and surgery.

#### **NHSGGC**

National Health Service Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

#### **BSL Health Champions**

Volunteers from the Deaf community in Glasgow play a crucial role in ensuring that the feelings and grievances of the Deaf community are heard and addressed. Their responsibilities include:

1. Collecting feedback from the Deaf community regarding their experiences with NHSGGC's services.
2. Providing the insights and perspectives of the local Deaf community to NHSGGC, based on the feedback received.
3. Conducting Deaf Awareness training to educate healthcare staff and the wider community about the needs of Deaf individuals.
4. Acting as secret shoppers to assess the effectiveness and accessibility of online interpreting within healthcare facilities.
5. Distributing contact information for BSL mediators to grassroots members of the Deaf community, enabling them to access support and advocacy when needed.

By volunteering their time and expertise, these individuals contribute to creating a more inclusive and responsive healthcare environment for the Deaf community in Glasgow.

#### **BSL Providers**

BSL Providers are agencies contracted by NHSGGC to supply British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters to the NHSGGC interpreting team. These agencies operate within the framework of NHSGGC's tender program, ensuring compliance with contractual agreements and quality standards. As key partners, BSL Providers play a vital role in facilitating effective communication between healthcare professionals and Deaf or hard-of-hearing patients within the NHSGGC system.

#### **Core Mental Health Standards**

As part of the Scottish Government's wider work to improve mental health services and care, they have developed new core mental health standards, which stem from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These standards set out clear expectations for what services will provide, whilst recognising the need for local flexibility and how we will provide assurance of high-quality care. Please refer to the Scottish Government website for more information.

[Core mental health standards - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

## **Dashboard**

The NHS E-Health team has developed a dashboard aimed at identifying and flagging Deaf individuals within the healthcare system. This innovative solution collaborates with NHSGGC interpreting services to ensure that Deaf individuals have a designated interpreter booked for their appointments.

For example, if a Deaf individual, whose need for communication support is documented in their medical records, visits the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department, the system's dashboard will automatically identify this need and alert the interpreting services. This notification prompts the provision of a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to assist the Deaf person during their time at A&E.

## **Capital 'D' in Deaf**

In this report, by capitalising the "D" in "Deaf," it emphasise the cultural and linguistic aspects of Deaf identity, recognising it as a distinct and vibrant community with its own language, history, and customs. This distinction is important for acknowledging and respecting the diversity and richness of the Deaf experience.

Culturally, Deaf individuals typically use sign language (such as British Sign Language in the UK) as their primary mode of communication and often have a strong sense of belonging to the Deaf community.

## **EMIS**

EMIS Health, formerly known as Egton Medical Information Systems, supplies [electronic patient record systems](#) and software used in [primary care](#), [acute care](#) and [community pharmacy](#) in the United Kingdom.

## **FEAT – Frontline Equality Assessment Tool**

In healthcare, ensuring equality and accessibility for Deaf individuals involves several considerations, including:

1. **Communication Accessibility:** Ensuring that healthcare facilities have appropriate communication tools and resources for Deaf individuals, such as sign language interpreters, video remote interpreting (VRI) services, captioning services for videos and written materials in accessible formats.
2. **Cultural Competency:** Healthcare providers should receive training on Deaf culture and communication needs to provide culturally competent care to Deaf patients.
3. **Policy and Procedure Review:** Regularly reviewing policies and procedures to identify and address any barriers to access for Deaf individuals.
4. **Patient Feedback and Input:** Seeking feedback from Deaf patients about their experiences accessing healthcare services and using this feedback to improve accessibility and quality of care.
5. **Staff Training and Education:** Providing ongoing training and education to healthcare staff on how to effectively communicate and interact with Deaf patients, as well as on relevant laws and regulations related to accessibility and equality.

## **HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP))**

There are six Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP) across the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area, which manage a wide range of local health and social care services delivered in health centres, clinics, schools and home.

[East Dunbartonshire HSCP](#)

[East Renfrewshire HSCP](#)

[Inverclyde HSCP](#)

[Glasgow City HSCP](#)

[Renfrewshire HSCP](#)

[West Dunbartonshire HSCP](#)

HSCPs services cover:

- Social Care for adults and older people
- Carers support
- Homelessness
- Mental Health
- Alcohol and drug
- Criminal Justice
- District Nursing
- Palliative Care
- Dental
- Pharmaceutical
- Sexual health
- School nursing, and
- Health Visiting.

## **Inclusive Communication Duty**

The Scottish Government are bringing in a new law under the Equality Act (2010) to introduce a new inclusive communications duty for the public sector in Scotland. The new law should be in place by April 2025.

They are currently drafting regulations and exploring definitions for 'accessible' and 'inclusive' to be included in the new law.

The intention is that these regulations will create a cultural change whereby communications from public listed authorities are written in Plain English where possible i.e. written in clear, concise and straightforward English.

## **Social Isolation and Loneliness Strategy**

The Scottish Government plans to take forward the delivery of A Connected Scotland – their strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections.

Please see link for more information.

[Supporting documents - Social isolation and loneliness: Recovering our Connections 2023 to 2026 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

## Accessible Formats

This publication has been produced in line with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's Accessible Information Guidelines. It is available in British Sign Language and English on our [web pages](#).

For any other format or more information contact us.

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