

BSL Plan

2024 - 2030



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Second Person Narrative
Photo © Tim Morozzo/
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Part 1: Introduction & Background

About This Plan

This is the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's second BSL Plan, as required by the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, covering the period 2024 - 2030.

The plan follows the Scottish Government's National BSL Plan, published on 6th November 2023, which sets out a range of government actions to tackle barriers faced by British Sign Language (BSL) users to help make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work, visit and learn. The second national plan has refocused slightly, following research and engagement with d/Deaf and Deafblind BSL users, and those who work with them.

Our plan is framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan, where these are relevant to the work of the Conservatoire.

This plan supports the RCS Strategy 2030 "*People, Place and Promise*", which details our mission, vision and values for the next six years:

Our Mission

For RCS's education, engagement and research in the performing arts to be a catalyst to shape the future of art forms, artists and society.

Our Vision

A sustainable community that nurtures, supports and celebrates inclusive art making from grassroots to world-leading performance and production.

Our Values

Creative courage | Compassion | Constructive challenge | Curiosity
Craft, rigour and talent | Community

All of our activities should be seen through the perspective of *People, Place and Promise*.

There are five active supporting plans covering the main areas of RCS's portfolio, and each of these will be delivered through projects whose outcomes will fulfil the objectives – and ultimately the vision and mission – of the Conservatoire.

The Supporting Plans

Learning and Teaching | Research and Ethical Practice | Engagement and Creative Economy | Organisational Resilience | People and Culture

Our commitment to considering the needs and rights of BSL users is progressively being mainstreamed through all the above structures and plans, with the ultimate aim of BSL accessibility being considered within everything that we do.

Before the implementation of our first BSL Plan in 2018, we established a BSL Act Working Group which brought together staff and students from across RCS to discuss, explore and consider the best way to progress the commitments we had jointly agreed, and which had been approved by the Conservatoire Senior Management Team. The Working Group includes BSL users, both staff and students, and other key stakeholders, and continues to grow and evolve.

RCS BSL Contacts

The RCS contacts for any questions or feedback in relation to the BSL Plan are:

Roz Caplan - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Officer (r.caplan@rcs.ac.uk)

Rita McDade - Translation Lecturer & Coordinator (r.mcdade@rcs.ac.uk)

Additionally, BSL users can contact us via contactSCOTLAND-BSL or may choose to use any of the following alternatives: AVA.com, FaceTime, Skype or Camfrog.

Where to find the BSL version of this plan

The BSL Version of the Conservatoire's BSL Plan can be accessed [via YouTube](#)

Summary of the BSL Plan 2024 -30

Part 2 of the plan outlines the areas we will focus on for the duration of our second plan. These correspond to goals within the national plan, wherever they are relevant to the RCS's core business. For that reason, we will not be addressing the goals of "Transport" and "Access to Justice".

Part 3 of this plan contains a summary of some of our achievements from our first BSL Plan

A detailed review of the outcomes and achievements from our first BSL Plan, together with the learning we gathered along the way, can be [downloaded from our website](#).

Part 2: BSL Plan 2024 - 2030

Our BSL Plan for 2024 -2030

Listed below are our commitments to furthering the 7 priority areas from the National Plan which are relevant to the work of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

A full operational action plan will sit under each of the priority areas, developed in partnership by the BSL Act Working Group and the lead colleagues for the area involved. The action plans will contain details of actions, timescales, responsibilities and success measures, which will be monitored by the BSL Plan Working Group at quarterly meetings and reported on annually to the People & Culture Committee.

The action plans will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they remain relevant and fit for purpose.

Priority Area 1: BSL Accessibility

RCS aims to be an inclusive and welcoming community in which to learn and work, as well as visit, engage and experience performance. As part of this, we want RCS students, staff and visitors who use BSL to engage positively and fully. This applies to both in-person interactions as well as RCS's digital communications. We recognise the importance to BSL users of accurate, up-to-date information being available when needed and presented in a suitable format. We therefore aim to ensure that information accessible to BSL users is available as widely as possible and want to ensure these resources are highlighted both internally and externally.

As we continue to develop in our understanding and approach, we will also continue to review. We recognise too that resource and financial commitment will continue to be required to ensure BSL users at RCS feel informed, supported and valued as part of this creative community.

Priority Area 2: Children, Young People & their Families

We aim to increase awareness of opportunities for children and young people who use BSL to access training at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland via the Fair Access, Junior Conservatoire and Short Courses programmes. We will work collaboratively across departments to ensure we grow connections with external partners who work directly with children, young people and their families who use BSL in their households. We will design specific activities for children and young people to ensure they have the same opportunities to learn as those from hearing backgrounds.

Priority Area 3: Access to Employment

We aim to develop practices and support systems within RCS that will lead to RCS being viewed as an employer of choice by BSL users. This will include access to employment routes and progression within the organisation. This will have a focus on activities for young people who are BSL users to support them in learning about transitioning into and navigating the workplace. We will continue to employ mentors and producers who are BSL users on a freelance basis, from across the sector and wider creative community, to work with our student BSL users.

Priority Area 4: Health & Wellbeing

We aim to provide health and wellbeing activities and support that are accessible to those who use BSL. We are keen to understand health concerns that may be particular to BSL users, and we will identify what the concerns and needs are.

We will then consider how we can raise awareness of these and offer support within an individual's place of work or study. We will also focus on the provision of additional training and promoting BSL training to those staff involved in wellbeing support, such as Mental Health First Aiders, Gender-Based Violence First Responders, etc.

Priority Area 5: Celebrating BSL Culture

We are in a unique position at the RCS to run dedicated d/Deaf performance training provision, with a continuing commitment to ensure all BSL users feel valued members of the RCS and wider community.

We aim to ensure that BSL and deaf culture is ingrained in extracurricular and recreational activities offered at the RCS, increasing opportunities for engagement and collaboration across all areas. We collaborate with film-making students, musicians, production students and actors - putting BSL at the heart of these joint ventures. We are exploring how to translate symphonic music into a visual, signed form and we aim to strengthen these ties and expand them beyond the RCS.

We will continue to offer interdisciplinary extended practice modules to all students to obtain credits in this area. Working with the wider BSL and d/Deaf community, and with improved planning and scheduling, we aim to increase our offer of accessible performances, providing more options for audience engagement.

Priority Area 6: BSL Data

We will strengthen our evidence on the BSL community across the RCS, including through student, staff and audience data, to better inform decision making.

We will continue to gather data on student BSL users at matriculation. We will ask potential staff whether they are BSL users, or have experience of using BSL, at the application stage. We will use CPD records to establish the numbers and demographics of staff with BSL qualifications, and to identify staff training opportunities. We will investigate ways to gather data on BSL users in our audiences, and use this to identify areas of the community who are not engaging with RCS performances.

Priority Area 7: Democratic Participation

We will aim to ensure that there is a clear overview of the committee and meeting structure within the RCS, and that pathways to participation in both structured and unstructured forms of engagement with these encourage and support participation from BSL users.

The Student Union will review and enhance their structures and processes to ensure that they more fully meet the needs of BSL users and will ensure that there is ongoing communication between the SU and students who are BSL users throughout the academic year.



Clockwise from top left: *Second Person Narrative* rehearsals, *The Assumption* rehearsals, *The Assumption*, *Second Person Narrative* rehearsals, *Second Person Narrative*.
Photos © Tim Morozzo/
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Part 3: BSL Plan 2018 - 2024: Summary of Achievements

During the six-year period of our first BSL Plan, we implemented many actions with the aim of making the RCS a more **accessible, welcoming and supportive environment** within which BSL users could learn, work or visit as an audience member.

A small selection of achievements is below:

- Pre-application workshop held for BSL users to provide more information about what is expected when invited for an audition for the BA Performance in BSL & English programme.
- Skills classes held online for international applicants who were interested in the BA Performance in BSL & English programme, in addition to online BSL classes for d/Deaf international students who were keen to learn BSL before joining the Conservatoire.
- Successful outcomes for graduates of BA Performance in BSL & English programme: Graduates from first 2 cohorts (graduation years 2018 and 2021) are busy working in a variety of settings and roles: actors, directors, writers, workshop leaders, consultants, BSL performers and producers. As is the aim of the programme, they are demonstrating the ability to maintain and thrive with a portfolio career: as actors, makers of work and more broadly. They are also changing the landscape of performance locally, nationally and internationally, raising the profile of Deaf performance and bringing it to a wider audience.
- Inclusion of BSL monitoring at staff employment and student matriculation.
- Undertaking of an audit of all staff and students to identify number of BSL users, whether as primary or secondary/ subsequent language.
- Provision of training to all incoming students on basic BSL and deaf awareness.
- Customised training provision for staff teams to ensure specific needs are met.
- Introduction of the BSL Learning Café pilot to ensure that students and staff who had attended BSL courses could continue to maintain their skills or even develop them within an informal and supportive environment. The Café is also open to complete beginners.
- Provision of a professional deaf BSL counsellor for students.
- Developed a range of collaborative opportunities between students on the BA Performance programme and other programmes across the School of Drama, Dance, Production & Film.
- Supported student-led projects which explored and developed the integration of BSL, music and sonic interpretation, through the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Creative Fund.

Full details of our achievements against our BSL Plan 2018-2024 can be viewed in our review document which can be downloaded from our website.



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland

I saw all the endings
an endless kaleidoscope of finales
flashing before
my eyes

