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BSL Plan 2018 -2024

**REVIEW OF BSL PLAN 2018-2024**

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| **3.1 RCS shares the long-term goal for all Scottish public services set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *“Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users”*** | | | |
| **By 2024 we will:**  **3.1.1 Analyse existing evidence we have about students, staff, prospective students and prospective staff who use BSL: identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish where we are now and measure our progress.** | | | |
| **ACTIONS** | **OUTCOME** | **LEARNING** | **CARRY OVER TO 24/30?** |
| Scope existing mechanisms for collecting BSL user data (quantitative and qualitative) and implement required changes to systems and processes. | A new field was introduced for both student matriculation and staff recruitment to record BSL users within the Conservatoire. This identified whether BSL is an individual’s primary or additional language. | This information can be updated by staff on an annual basis when they are requested to check their personal data.  We can update our data by undertaking occasional audits. | No – standard practice |
| Include data on BSL users routinely in relevant internal and external reports and use the data to inform equality impact assessments of decisions, services and activities. | Data is used in relevant reports, for example our Mainstreaming Equality Report.  The information is also used to inform decisions around Estates, Health & Safety and so on (e.g. review of outdated pager system used for fire alarm alerts). | This is an area that we can enhance further in the coming period, specifically embedding within Equality Impact Assessments. | Yes |
| **3.1.2 Improve information and services for students and prospective students who use BSL, including making our website more accessible to BSL users** | | | |
| Identify the key information and services to be improved over the cycle of the first BSL plan.  Secure resources and expertise to develop and deliver improvements to information and services, including our website. | The BSL Act Working Group and colleagues from the BA Performance in BSL & English programme identified key documentation for translation.  We introduced a process whereby it was intended that key emails were BSL translated and released at the same time as the written version was sent out –A deaf BSL translator was employed to undertake this work.  We piloted the translation of our weekly Principal’s Newsletter, which is emailed to all students and staff at the end of each week during term time. This was costly, but it was considered important to trial for a term to ensure that BSL users were not disadvantaged in accessing information from the Principal.  We started off with the Newsletter and held discussion with the students who felt the **notes** rather than the Newsletter would be their preference.  Further along the line, we held another discussion, and the students felt the **Weekly Notes** were now not a priority and would rather that the funding be 'ringfenced' for something more relevant to them.  In other words, the students made the decision for us. | Whilst the practice of contemporaneous translation of key emails was successful for those communications for which it was used, it did not always work in practice as some communications were unfortunately missed.  Due to the extremely low uptake of this provision, it was agreed that it would only be used when the information was of specific interest/ relevance to BSL users.  The impact of covid and financial constraints have had and continue to have an impact on the amount and nature of developments we have been able to deliver, but we are committed to making continual improvements wherever we can.  A new RCS website is nearing implementation (Spring 2024) and will be more accessible to BSL users, with more BSL content available. | Yes |
| **3.1.3 Promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services “contact-SCOTLAND-BSL”, which allows BSL users to contact public and third sector services and for these services to contact them** | | | |
| **ACTIONS** | **OUTCOME** | **LEARNING** | **CARRY OVER TO 24/30?** |
| Use all internal channels such as Principal’s Newsletters, (student and) staff email, manager briefings and team meetings to cascade information on ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’ to all staff. | The ContactSCOTLAND-BSL provision was widely publicised on the launch of the BSL Plan.  Some staff choose to include details in their email signature. | Regular reminders would be helpful to ensure BSL users, both internal and external, are aware of the provision. | No - standard practice. |
| Identify relevant frontline staff and provide tailored training sessions on using ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’. | Training was identified for relevant staff, but no tailored training was considered necessary. | Review training needs of current staff as they may be different 6 years on. | No - standard practice. |
| We will also make students and staff aware of alternative means of communication in addition to this, such as *NGT (Next Generation Text), AVA.com, FaceTime, SKYPE and CAMFROG., through email and poster campaign.* | Students and staff were made aware of alternative means of communication, which were initially viewed more favourably by many. | Review use of different provisions to identify if any are more appropriate within our context, or if it is always an individual preference. | No - standard practice. |
| **3.1.4 Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training and enable them to take up such training** | | | |
| Continue to provide range of BSL and deaf awareness training internally for staff and students, including customised training for targeted staff teams as appropriate. | Introduction to Basic BSL and Deaf Awareness workshops are available to staff on a regular basis and can be customised for specific staff teams as required (e.g. a workshop was designed especially for front of house staff to equip them to meet the needs of our d/Deaf patrons more effectively).  Incoming students receive a short workshop on basic BSL and can then select to undertake an IXP (Interdisciplinary & Extended Practice) module in BSL, although this is often over-subscribed due to its popularity. | These workshops, which are delivered inhouse, are very popular and provide excellent feedback.  The EDI Officer coordinates the workshops which are led by the Translation Lecturer and Coordinator, who are the joint leads for the BSL Plan.  BA Performance students tend to choose IXP modules to enhance their existing skill or learn something different. Where only one student wants to select a module, this cannot always be accommodated due to the costs of providing a CFI for them. | Yes |
| Consider training more staff to BSL Foundation Level or equivalent and Intermediate Level or equivalent. Undertake an audit of staff to produce a baseline dataset of skill levels during first year, and report against this on an annual basis | In February 2022 we undertook an audit of students and staff to produce a baseline dataset of skills and to establish the appetite for and interest in further BSL training.  265 responses were received, predominantly from those with an interest in pursuing further training opportunities or, more frequently, a desire to maintain their existing learning.  It was not considered appropriate to undertake another audit until action had been implemented from the first one. It is intended that a future audit will take place within the first half of this Plan, and thereafter every 3 years, as an annual audit is now recognised as being too frequent. | It was widely felt that whilst the training was excellent, there was a lack of follow up so that skills were soon lost due to lack of use.  During the 2023/34 academic year, a 2-hour drop-in BSL Learning Café is being piloted in the library over lunchtimes, to provide an opportunity for staff and students to practice and maintain their level of BSL skills, and hopefully develop them further.  We will review the success of the initiative at the end of the pilot period. We have already received expressions of interest from beyond the institution to participate in this initiative, but it is currently only open to staff and students. | Yes |
| **3.1.5 Take steps to ensure that our campuses and facilities are fully accessible to BSL issues** | | | |
| Develop calendar of training to deliver to relevant staff and students over the cycle of the BSL Plan. | Training for students via the options module is programmed into the academic timetable.  Staff training is undertaken on a regular basis, generally twice each year.  A Stage Manager Workshop is run annually to ensure that people in these roles know how to effectively work with interpreters in productions. |  | No – standard practice |

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| **3.2 RCS shares the long-term goal for Post School Education set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *“BSL users will be able to maximise their potential at school and will be supported to transition to post-school education, if they wish to do so, and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s)”*** | | | |
| **By 2024 we will:**  **3.2.1 Take action to ensure that students and prospective students who use BSL are properly supported in all aspects of their learner journey** | | | |
| **ACTION** | **OUTCOME** | **LEARNING** | **CARRY OVER TO 24/30?** |
| Provide accessible information about what BSL users can expect from RCS | We have a wide range of information relating to what BSL users can expect from the Conservatoire (much of which is in relation to participation on the BA Performance in BSL & English programme).  We have large screens around our campus which regularly show signed information about productions and promote our Deaf Theatre Club (which offers tickets to all signed productions for just £5). The screens can also be used to display other relevant information for BSL users and will be updated as and when necessary to tie in with changes. | Through consultation, we will review the information on the new website and identify if there are areas that could be developed further.  One proposal that has emerged through consultation is that the screens should display the same announcements that are spoken via loud speakers before performances, to ensure that d/Deaf audience members are equally well informed. | Yes |
| Provide full access to open days for prospective students who use BSL. | BSL Communication Facilitation Interpreters (CFIs) are available as required at open days and offer holder sessions. Individuals are asked to request a CFI and that will then be arranged. | Initially CFIs were present at all open days, but it became apparent as they were not always needed, valuable funds and resources were being used that could be better used elsewhere. | No - standard practice |
| Provide support throughout the student journey for students who use BSL (including completing application forms, interviews, applying for Disabled Students Allowance, SAAS etc., learning and teaching, placements, exams and graduation). | We provided an online service for potential students who wanted or needed to learn BSL before they could start thinking about applying for the programme. In addition to that, Skills classes were held online too and were well attended by international d/Deaf students. Furthermore, participants were provided with more information about what is expected when invited for an audition through a two-day workshop.  BSL users are supported throughout the student journey through accessible information, the use of ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’ (and other means of communication) and having access to BSL CFIs as required.  The BA Performance staff team are experienced in providing support across all issues, and in calling in support from other areas as required.  The library, in collaboration with a BA Performance in BSL & English graduate, produced a series of videos in BSL to provide detailed directions for all major activities and resources.  If students wish to deliver tasks in BSL in IXP modules (Interdisciplinary & Extended Practice outside the BA Performance curriculum), they are given extended deadlines to allow for additional translation time.  BSL Communication Facilitation Interpreters (CFIs) are present at all graduation ceremonies (3 per day in July and November).  For several years we automatically booked a CFI for our AGM, but recognised that this was unnecessary and costly as no BSL users attended the meetings. This will be reviewed as new students and staff join our learning and teaching community. | Consultation with current students has identified the benefit of reviewing levels of support, with a view to extending them further on an individual basis.  Pre-IXP meetings are arranged to communicate good practice communications with different leaders and the students involved ahead of the intensive weeks. | Yes |
| **3.2.2 Take on board guidance produced by the SFC and others to ensure that across RCS, staff are aware of their responsibilities towards BSL users and that students who use BSL know what to expect.** | | | |
| Use all internal channels such as the Learning & Teaching Conference, Principal’s Newsletters, staff email, manager briefings and team meetings to cascade information on guidance and good practice. | We have used all available means to communicate with staff, making them aware of the BSL Plan and sharing guidance on good practice.  We have delivered customised BSL Act workshops for academics in specific areas to ensure that they are equipped to fulfil their responsibilities under the Act. | We will use the launch of the new BSL Plan as an opportunity to remind staff of their responsibilities and to promote training opportunities for new staff. | Yes |
| **3.2.3 Over the coming 18 months invite continuous feedback from students/ prospective students and staff who use BSL after adopting this plan.** | | | |
| Collect feedback through a survey, focus groups and 1 to 1 meetings to inform future activities. | Students on the BA Performance in BSL & English programme were our primary focus for initial feedback, and members of the cohort were active members of the BSL Act Working Group which monitors and leads on the work of the BSL Plan. | We continue to benefit from student membership on the BSL Act Working Group, but in lower numbers. This is likely due to the extremely tight timetable. Alternative means exist for consulting with the students on the programme, including the weekly drop-in sessions and class meetings, where colleagues from different departments are invited to talk with the students. | Ongoing |
| Make BSL users who are not on the BA Performance programme in the RCS aware that they can request a slot on the interpreter drop-in session on Wednesdays from 10 – 12 to feedback on the BSL Plan. | To date, all BSL users within the RCS have been staff or students on the BA Performance programme, so are automatically aware of the sessions. | We must ensure that we flag up the sessions to any future staff or students who are BSL users and are not connected to the BA Performance programme. | Ongoing |
| **3.2.4 By October 2020 the Scottish Government will produce a national progress report, after which we commit to reviewing/ refreshing this plan.** | | | |
| Use feedback collected from BSL users and also consult with Directors and Heads of Departments to develop more ‘local’ actions. | We reviewed and refreshed the plan to a small degree following the national progress report.  School Management meetings were attended to request that local actions be considered, in the same way that they have been for race issues. | Follow up what local actions have been identified and implemented, in order that we may share best practice across the institution. | Ongoing |

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| **3.3 The Conservatoire shares the long-term goal for training, work and social security set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: *“BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish 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”.*** | | | |
| **By 2024 we will:**  **3.3.1 Raise awareness of the UK Government’s Access to Work scheme for students who use BSL towards the end of their course, so that they can benefit from the support it provides when they enter the world of work** | | | |
| **ACTION** | **OUTCOME** | **LEARNING** | **CARRY OVER TO 24/30?** |
| Review current provision and support in relation to Access to Work (A2W) for students. | We reviewed the A2W provision and it became apparent that it was not applicable to students. | Students can only apply for A2W when they leave education for work. | No |
| Identify appropriate mechanisms to provide feedback to DWP about (in)accessibility to A2W for BSL users. | We provided some feedback when staff have encountered difficulties, including graduates from the BA Performance programme, but have not received any update from A2W. | In retrospect it became apparent that it would need to be the individual themselves who provides any feedback, rather than the institution.  The BA Performance programme now provides a workshop session on A2W as part of “Industry (Professional Practice)”, to prepare for graduation and entry into the industry. | No |
| **3.3.2 Take steps to ensure that HR policies and processes in relation to the staff experience are fully accessible to people who use BSL** | | | |
| Review policies and processes in relation to key stages of the staff experience. | All HR policies and processes have been reviewed and updated during the period of this Plan. | We are reviewing our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process and will identify BSL users as a named group to ensure needs are taken into account. | Yes |
| Develop action plan based on findings with actions that are embedded into HR plans and processes. | This will be revisited with our revised EIA format. |  | Yes |
| Review current provision and support of mental health services and identify gaps in relation to BSL support. | How accessible are the resources on the site of our employee assistance programme?  Waiting for a response/ contact from EAP | We need to consider BSL support/ provision within our inhouse Mental Health First Aider provision. | Yes |
| Include BSL provision in the provision of counselling and support services (including the availability of a d/Deaf counsellor whenever possible). | We outsource our staff mental health support to an employee assistance programme, who can provide a counsellor who is a BSL user on request. |  | No |
| Review current provision and support of staff support services and identify gaps in relation to BSL support. | Prepare for the induction of new staff who are BSL users. | A working group is being set up to develop successful staff induction.  Discussion is also underway regarding BSL accessibility to HR systems and | Ongoing |
| Include BSL provision in the development and implementation of future staff wellbeing policies and provision. | BSL provision is considered in the development of new staff wellbeing policies and provision. | Current demand is very low. We are able to implement support (i.e. provision of CFIs) as required. | No - standard practice |
| Review current provision and support for BSL users in wellbeing classes and activities. | There was no existing provision for BSL users, but discussions were held with staff BSL users to identify needs. | No issues were identified but it was acknowledged that future members of staff may wish to engage in the classes available so we should be prepared for this. | Yes |
| Include BSL provision in the planning of wellbeing classes and activities. | This was explored and options for provision of CFIs in future wellbeing classes was agreed wherever possible. | Where this proved potentially problematic within some wellbeing classes, alternative mechanisms were identified, such as pre-recorded and translated videos. | Yes |

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| **3.5 The Conservatoire shares the long-term goal for culture and the arts set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: “BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland”.** | | | |
| **By 2024 we will:**  **3.5.1 Take action to ensure that extracurricular/recreational activities offered within the Conservatoire are fully accessible to students who use BSL** | | | |
| **ACTION** | **OUTCOME** | **LEARNING** | **CARRY OVER TO 24/30?** |
| Review current provision and support for BSL users in relation to student events and activities, including Fresher’s Week, clubs and societies.  Include BSL provision in the planning and delivery of student events and activities. | Communication Facilitator Interpreters (CFIs) were booked for all student council meetings and on request for all other SU activities, including Freshers Week. | It is recognised that automatic booking of CFIs could use up limited resources unnecessarily, so it is practice to now ensure that CFIs are needed at events. This does mean that BSL users will need to make attendance decisions in advance of others and are therefore *slightly* disadvantaged. | No - standard practice |
| Schedule regular information and update sessions for students who are BSL users by Student Union, Library, Health & Safety, Department Heads etc., to ensure students are completely involved and aware of what is happening within the Conservatoire community. | SU president or vice president to regularly attend BA Performance class meetings.  Other key areas have attended class meetings to share information and provide updates. | We need to ensure that these meetings continue to take place and promote the opportunity for colleagues to make use of the meetings to share information and gather feedback. | Yes |

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| **3.5.2 Take action to ensure that our artistic output is more accessible to students, staff and customers who use BSL, with either BSL interpretation or captioning of an increasing number of performances being programmed over the lifetime of this Plan.** | | | |
| **ACTION** | **OUTCOME** | **LEARNING** | **CARRY OVER TO 24/30?** |
| Look for opportunities to expand the pool of interpreters who work on the BA Performance programme and find opportunities for those wishing to expand their skills in accessible performances, including the use of graduates where appropriate. | We have expanded the pool of interpreters who work on the BA Performance programme and have added to the number of interpreters who work on productions.  However, the work undertaken to do this has been undermined by the impact of COVID.  BSL Ambassadors include BA Performance graduates. | The interpreting industry landscape has changed, following COVID lockdown has seen a number of CFIs preferring to make more use of the online service. This is challenging for the type of work the students are involved with. Example, many of the classes are not theory/speak type. Example, Rehearsals are best carried out in-person rather than online. |  |
| Explore the viability of training relevant staff to develop skills and capacity to enable captioning of performances in-house. |  | This was explored but found not to be a practical option due to cost of training and purchase/ loan of equipment. | No |
| Introduce a number of signed Family Performances within the School of Music, to develop a D/deaf audience. | This idea was put into practice by students and alumni from the School of Music and students from the BA Performance in BSL & English through successful bids to the EDI Creative Fund panel.  The initiative(s) were not specifically targeted at families, but at a combined d/Deaf and hearing audience.  This has led to the development of the EDI Symphony Orchestra, which brings together students, staff, alumni and BA Performance students. | This is an exciting and developing area of work that continues to be student led; - the developing role of sign-mimer or sonic-visual performer, conveying the music expressions, and allowing the performance to be accessible to audiences with varying levels of hearing, whist allowing the sonic-visual performers to contribute without the necessity to learn music notation. | Ongoing |

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| **3.6 The Conservatoire shares the long-term goal for democracy set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: “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”.** | | | |
| **By 2024 we will:**  **3.6.1 Take steps to ensure that the policies and processes in relation to recruiting and supporting members of our Board of Governors, which is our governing body, are fully accessible to people who use BSL.** | | | |
| **ACTION** | **OUTCOME** | **LEARNING** | **CARRY OVER TO 24/30?** |
| Review current provision and support for BSL users in relation to recruitment of governors to the Board.  Include BSL provision in the delivery of future recruitment of governors to the Board. | We enlist the help of Changing the Chemistry and Nurole in our recruitment of governors. Both organisations’ raison d'être is to support organisations in increasing the diversity, efficiency and functionality of their boards. |  | Yes  (as part of a wider project) |
| Consider having a co-opted member who is a BSL user on the Board of Governors. | This was discussed on several occasions within and beyond the BSL Plan Working Group. | The opinion of our d/Deaf community was that this would be tokenistic and patronising. | No |
| The Executive will provide the necessary support in order to help prospective candidates from the BSL community to run for executive positions within the SU e.g.: objective support in effective campaigning, means of sharing information and other areas which may require the support of the SU Executive to assist BSL users in campaigning.  This outcome could stem from having a strong BSL presence on the SU Council, which is achieved through the existence of BA Performance in BSL and English student experience representative roles. | The SU were successful in this action, having 3 BSL users on the Student Council at one stage.  This changed when there was an academic year without a cohort of BA Performance students, as there were no other student BSL users who wished to stand for council. | The SU Executive have the ability to support student BSL users who wish to stand for an SU role in a wide range of ways.  It should be noted that this has an obvious impact on the SU budget, which may need addressing in the event of future Exec members. | Yes |