

Food Standards Scotland British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2021-2024

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1. Introduction and context

1.1 Background

Welcome to Food Standards Scotland's (FSS) British Sign Language (BSL) Plan (2021-2024).

FSS, along with all public bodies across Scotland, is required to publish a BSL plan setting out how it will promote and support the [Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2017-23](#).

This plan aims to improve the accessibility of FSS's services and information to BSL users¹. It details the goals and specific actions that FSS plans to carry out and implement by 2024 to ensure there are no barriers to BSL users in accessing our information.

It follows the goals set out in the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan (published 24 October 2017), which was developed following extensive consultation and engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them.

FSS's plan was developed by its BSL Steering Group with support from Scottish Deaf and sensory impairment organisations as well as engagement with BSL users and members of the Deaf community. Two online consultations were carried out (in 2019 and 2020) and a virtual event was held with support from the British Deaf Association (Scotland) in December 2020. The aim of the event was to seek views directly from BSL users and the Deaf community and ensure the actions outlined in our plan meet their requirements.

All of the feedback received through the consultation was considered and used to inform the final version of this plan.

FSS recognise the importance of BSL to Scotland and we're committed to ensuring that BSL users can easily access the information they need.

1.2 About FSS

FSS was established on 1 April 2015 by the Food (Scotland) Act 2015 as a non-ministerial office, part of the Scottish Administration, alongside, but separate from, the Scottish Government.

FSS is the public sector food body for Scotland. Its duty is to protect the interests of Scottish consumers in relation to food. We provide information and advice on food safety and healthy eating and nutrition. This information needs to be easily accessed by all to make sure that we protect public health and help all people in Scotland to have diets conducive to good health.

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

FSS puts consumers' interests first and aims to be a credible, consistent and trusted voice on food matters in Scotland. Earning and keeping consumers' trust is central to ensuring people in Scotland listen to and act on our advice, which is evidence-based, and we act independently on their behalf. Protecting consumers means we also work closely with and regulate the food industry.

FSS is mainly funded by government, with a budget (financial year 20/21) of £20.2m. We also charge fees to recover costs for functions we carry out, such as meat inspection and providing vets in abattoirs. The organisation has around 250 staff, located in our head office in Aberdeen and based in the field.

FSS have a statutory objective to improve the extent to which members of the public have diets which are conducive to good health.

This includes providing advice in relation to diet and nutrition, with a particular focus on how we can help people in Scotland have diets that support good health, thereby reducing the impact of diet-related ill health such as conditions related to overweight and obesity.

We have also run several successful healthy eating and food safety marketing campaigns and are committed to helping raise awareness and change behaviours and attitudes to address Scotland's obesity crisis and protect public health.

FSS has a new strategy (2021 – 2026) that outlines our vision 'A safe, healthy and sustainable food environment that benefits and protects the health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland'. This will be published by April 2021 and available on our website.

1.3 Progress made – BSL initiatives

In developing this plan, the FSS BSL Steering Group has taken steps to help improve access to our information and promote Deaf awareness within the organisation. This includes:

- BSL website section
A [dedicated section on the FSS website](#) has been created to be a single point of information where all BSL/English translated materials and resources can be easily accessed.
- BSL and Deaf awareness training
FSS's Board and BSL Steering Group underwent BSL awareness training to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of BSL and its requirements.

As outlined in Section 2, we intend to build on this by creating more BSL/English translated content to ensure key information and advice on food safety and healthy eating is available to BSL users (including consumer marketing campaign materials), and providing similar training (including deafblindness) to FSS staff to encourage a more BSL knowledgeable workforce.

2. BSL action plan

FSS shares and supports the goals set out in the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2017-23. In particular FSS's action plan contributes to the following:

- Scottish Public Services
- Training, Work and Social Security
- Health
- Democracy

Scottish Public Services

Scottish Government's long-term Goal:

Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users

Develop, test and share a set of guidelines to help Scottish public services to improve access to information and services for BSL users. This will include advice on how to involve BSL users in the design and delivery of Scotland's public services.

Action 1: Monitor uptake of BSL services and improve FSS's understanding of BSL use. This will include continual tracking of requests for BSL/English translations and interpretation services, as well as downloads of BSL/English materials from the FSS website. It will also monitor any requests for accessible content from deafblind people, where possible.

Action 2: Improve accessibility to information on FSS's website by:

- conducting an audit of the FSS website by an independent body.
- creating further content (food safety information and healthy eating advice) for the [dedicated section on the FSS website](#) for all BSL/English translated materials. This will be made visible on the homepage and promoted externally.

Action 3: Seek feedback and ensure continuous engagement with the BSL community throughout FSS's BSL plan's implementation and lifetime.

Action 4: Ensure that consumer marketing campaigns are developed to take account of BSL users' needs and requirements during the development stage, where possible.

Action 5: Provide BSL/English interpretation at events/Board meetings when requested and ensure the appropriate communication support is provided, if possible.

Action 6: Provide a summary of FSS's Annual Report and Accounts in BSL/English, braille and/or large print versions when requested, where possible.

Action 7: Raise awareness of FSS being BSL-friendly through internal and external communications channels such as social media, email and marketing materials.

Action 8: To explore other communication platforms which could be used between BSL users and FSS to provide any additional options when accessing and sharing FSS's information and advice.

Promote the use of the Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service (VRS) called 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL', which allows BSL users to contact public and third sector services and for these services to contact them, and explore the potential for its greater use.

Action 9: Promote the use of Scottish Government's nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay service contactSCOTLAND-BSL for access to FSS's services and information.

Encourage public bodies to access BSL awareness training for staff who may work with BSL users, and signpost to appropriate training.

Action 10: Develop awareness amongst FSS staff through training and all staff meetings to encourage a BSL and deafblind knowledgeable workforce.

Action 11: Explore the opportunity for ongoing training for members of FSS to become proficient in BSL to support any staff and visitors at FSS who are BSL users.

Training, Work and Social Security

Scottish Government's long-term Goal:

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.

Action 12: Ensure BSL users have equal opportunity to join the FSS workforce by ensuring that recruiting managers always consider a role and its suitability for BSL users. Recruiting managers will ensure job opportunities are promoted among the BSL community via key BSL stakeholders/groups.

Action 13: Support staff in their respective roles (office and field based) by making reasonable adjustments, providing specialist equipment and the appropriate communication support (i.e. tactile BSL interpreter) when required.

Health (including social care, mental health and wellbeing)

Scottish Government's long-term Goal:

BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives and to make informed choices at every stage of their lives.

Action 14: Ensure significant information relating to healthy eating and nutrition, public health, food safety advice and guidance to industry is accessible to BSL users, where possible i.e. on the FSS website and social media.

Democracy

Scottish Government's long-term Goal:

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.

Action 15: Ensure BSL users have equal opportunity to participate in public consultations and to become FSS Board members, where possible. These opportunities will be promoted among the BSL community via key BSL stakeholders/groups.

3. What happens next?

The final version of this document is available in written English and BSL versions on our website. Large font and braille versions are available on request at the contact details below.

We will continue to engage with BSL users throughout the plan's implementation and its lifetime to ensure that we're working towards delivering the goals and actions.

If you have any questions or would like to continue to be involved in the plan's development and future, please contact the BSL Steering Group:

Telephone: 01224 285100

Email: accessibility@fss.scot

Post: FAO BSL Steering Group, Food Standards Scotland, Pilgrim House, Old Ford Road, Aberdeen, AB11 5RL

contactSCOTLAND-BSL