Item 3

8th May 2024

Glasgow City Council

Operational Performance Delivery and Scrutiny Committee

Report by Chief Executive

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British Sign Language (BSL) Local Action Plan Progress Update

Purpose of Report:
To present an update on activity towards the Glasgow British Sign Language (BSL) action plan for 2022 - 2024

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the update on key areas of activity during 2022/24.
- Note that this update will be shared with the British Deaf Association who are coordinating Local Authority updates on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Ward No(s):	Citywide: ✓
Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐	consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

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1. Background

1.1 The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and the British Sign Language National Plan 2017 – 2023 required public bodies in Scotland to publish local action plans in 2018 and on a six yearly basis thereafter, showing how they will promote and support British Sign Language (BSL).

1.2 In May 2018, the General Purposes City Policy Committee considered a report which set out the process and timescale for developing and engaging on Glasgow's first BSL local action plan. The plan was subsequently approved by City Administration Committee on 15th November 2018. The most recent progress update was provided to Committee in 2021.

1.3 The new BSL Local Action Plan 2024-2030 is due to be finalised for submission to the Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities, Culture and Engagement Committee in May 2024 and will be published in line with statutory guidance thereafter.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Glasgow Council Family BSL action plan was developed in consultation with BSL users and focusses around key themes identified by the Scottish Government, Service Users, Services and Partners. This progress update will focus on the key areas below:

- Across all Services
- Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare,
- School Education
- Training, Work and Social Security
- Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and the Arts
- Democracy

2.2 This report provides an update on areas of progress during 2022/23 on the implementation of the BSL action plan.

2.3 Key reflections on the challenges of implementation of the plan in the past few years will also be reflected in the new BSL Action Plan; however, a number of key areas can be noted here for context:

- The legacy and impact of Covid 19 on service delivery and service user engagement
- The inflexibility of the plan to reflect this changing delivery landscape.
- The need to ensure that regular face to face consultation mechanisms are established in order to dialogue with the Deaf Community.

3. Key areas of progress 2022/23

3.1 The following is an overview of activity towards the BSL action plan over the last year, this does not represent all activity across each of the themes.

3.2 Across all our services

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

3.2.1 The BSL User Reference Group was established in 2019 to provide a direct link to the community and reflect the priorities of the community as the Council Family seeks to implement the Action Plan. It had been planned to reconvene the group on an annual basis, however the COVID pandemic significantly disrupted this. A smaller version of the group met in 2021 online a part of the Action Plan Progress update; but this form of engagement was not entirely satisfactory. Further online meetings were held with the British Deaf Association in 2022, and in person in November 2023 as part of the Scottish Government initiation of the new cycle of the plan; however, the Reference Group has been re-established following a face to face meeting with the BDA in March 2024, and will be convened after the publication of the new plan by June 2024 and again in October 2024.

3.2.2 The BSL user reference group has been utilised during COVID-19 response, along with local BSL organisations, to raise awareness of a dedicated COVID-19 page for BSL users. The content of this page mirrored that of the main COVID-19 page to ensure BSL users had up to date information on service changes.

3.2.3 Emerging from discussions with the Reference Group is a commitment to scope options for a BSL consultant in order to support the delivery of the new Action Plan, and this will be included in the new BSL Plan.

3.2.4 Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership

3.2.5 The BSL Short Life Working Group identified its unmet needs in October 2023 which comprised of identifying Systems for Assessing Unmet BSL Interpreter Needs and Establishing a Failsafe Recording System for BSL Status. Both objectives were pivotal in enhancing the provision of BSL interpreter services within NHSGGC and improving overall healthcare experience for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

3.2.6 A collaborative effort is underway, involving staff members from various departments, including Interpreting Services, the Equality and Human Rights team, E-Health (computer technology), Medical Records, the Active Clinical Notes team and Chief Nurses. Together, they are working towards achieving specific objectives outlined in a series of themed meetings:

- October 2023 - identifying unmet needs.
- November 2023 - actions for staff.
- January 2024 - Mental Health.
- March 2024 - 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 March 2024.

3.2.7 NHSGGC staff's eagerness to learn BSL has led to the establishment of BSL classes for the first time since 2019, following the challenges posed by COVID-19. A total of 10 classes were held across 6 hospital locations, accommodating a maximum of 14 students in each class. Overall, 140 students enrolled, and the classes spanned 6 weeks from May 29th to July 11th, 2023. Both healthcare professionals and participants mentioned the practical application of BSL skills in enhancing communication with Deaf patients and their families as having a positive impact on patient care. The course garnered highly positive feedback from participants, who appreciated the instructors' teaching approaches and participants acquired valuable skills such as communication and learning within healthcare setting.

3.2.8 A BSL Mediator has been employed by the NHSGGC; and their role includes acting as a mediator between Deaf individuals and the NGS Interpreting Service. This includes facilitating the booking of BSL interpreters for a range of healthcare services and ensuring Deaf individuals have equitable access to BSL interpreters for various health appointments. A number of referrals from the BSL Mediator showed a significant increase over the two time periods; from September 2021 to August 2022, there were 324 referrals which increased to 589 from September 2022 to August 2023. This represents an approximate an 82% increase in referrals.

3.2.9 In 2023, there was a significant increase in face-to-face Deaf Awareness training, with a total of 23 sessions and 453 participants attending. One key session was held at Glasgow University with nursing students, where there was a positive and encouraging response from participants. Comparatively, in 2022, there were 22 Deaf Awareness training sessions, primarily online, which only 141 participants attended. In response to this growing demand, a poster has been produced and distributed amongst NHSGGC staff to encourage them to participate in the Deaf Awareness training. The results have been promising; with learners highlighting the benefits of training and expressing their intention to improve their communication with BSL users and the significance of booking a BSL interpreter when appropriate. This progress underscores the optimistic impact of our efforts in promoting Deaf awareness and fostering stronger communication within the NHSGGC.

3.2.10 From October 2022 to October 2023, there were 8 visits to 'Deaf spaces', where a total of 124 Deaf individuals gathered socially. During these interactions, presentations were delivered to inform the Deaf community about the support initiatives undertaken by NHSGGC. These presentations included updates on NHSGGC's interpreting services and the introduction of new patient support iPads equipped with communication apps. Individual interviews were also conducted to provide a pathway for Deaf BSL users to express their concerns and share their experiences regarding the use of BSL interpreters. After these interviews, a clear preference emerged, indicating that they find face-to-face appointments to be significantly more effective than remote BSL interpreting solutions.

3.3 Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare

"*The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach will be fully embedded, with a deaf or deafblind child and their family offered the right information and support at the right time to engage with BSL. We will strengthen partnerships between relevant organisations to overcome barriers for BSL users and deaf/ deafblind children to ensure they have the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential*.'

3.3.1 The Sensory Support Service (HIISS) provides targeted support from our deaf Child Development Officer (CDO) in early years setting. The staff from HIISS work in close partnership with families to ensure their needs are met as soon as they're ready.

3.3.2 The ongoing work with families and relevant partners including speech and language therapists and Allied Health professionals to plan for children is ongoing through joint clinics, family sessions, multi-agency meetings and review meetings.

3.3.3 There is ongoing work to improve links and communication with partners to continue to signpost families to relevant agencies for sign language support through the Early Years Multi-Disciplinary Clinic and the Early Years New Referral Clinics. HIISS are continuing to provide this in partnership with NDCS and Allied Health professionals.

3.4 School Education

"Children and young people who use BSL will get the support they need at all stages of their learning, so that they can reach their full potential; parents who use BSL will have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child's education; and more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school"

3.4.1 Interpreters are provided for all meetings for children and families. In our secondary provision, families will often choose staff from school to interpret. Reports are offered in BSL and covered in review meetings. We provide informal events to support families to link and form a support network.

3.4.2 We continue to ensure schools are aware of the current information and guidance by engaging with parents who use BSL. There are two specialist staff who work closely with deaf families to ensure their needs are met and they can participate and engage with staff, for example attending parents' evening, reviews etc. However, it should be noted that during COVID, the level of parental attendance varied due to social distance and currently, this level of parental attendance has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

3.4.3 Education contribute to the Scottish Government's investigation of the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff by collating and reporting data on an annual basis and Consortium Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) survey and monitor internally to ensure they are following National Standards and expectations.

3.5 Training, Work and Social Security

"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"

3.5.1 GCC continues to offer wage incentives through the Glasgow Guarantee programme to support all age unemployed people with barriers/disadvantaged into work. Where candidates consider themselves to have a visual or hearing impairment, are deaf or blind, we work with employers to identify and put in place measures that support them through the recruitment process. Potential job opportunities continue to be advertised to specialist employability training providers, SDS, schools and Further Education/Higher Education (FE/HE) establishments. Access to Work is promoted to all candidates at the earliest opportunity by both In Work Support or Training Officers. A Glasgow Guarantee Provider/Partners Forum is in operation to discuss service improvements with a specific focus on equalities and accessibility.

3.5.2 Jobs and Business Glasgow continues to deliver the Work Life Glasgow programme, which includes the provision of all age specialist employability support to those with barriers to employment. This includes supporting individuals with health conditions or disabilities, such as BSL users prior to employment and when in work. In April 2024, budgets that currently fund the national Fair Start Scotland programme will be allocated to local government. This will allow the Work Life Glasgow programme to be scaled up in a way that increases reach and opportunity to those with barriers and physical disabilities including sensory impairment in the city.

3.5.3 Enable hold a contract for a specialist employability project for disabled people, a key aim is to address the disability employment gap in the city. This service has been designed to be accessible to and supportive of individuals with any disability, including deaf people. This contract, which was previously funded through the European Social Fund, will end in March 2024 with a successor project currently being procured. This will include provision of supported employment for individuals where it is required, a personalised model to help those with disabilities to secure and sustain employment.

3.5.4 Since 2022, the Glasgow City Council has worked in partnership with Apt to reduce the Disability Employment Gap. This collaborative effort has worked with ten employers to create more accessible recruitment processes and inclusive workplaces for individuals with disabilities, including people who are deaf. Deafblind Awareness has been provided to all these employers as part of the training programme.

3.5.5 More than 28 Sessions were delivered at various health centres across Glasgow city between August and November to improve links and communication with Glasgow City Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC). The sessions included:

- Understanding Deafness
- Promoting British Sign Language and inclusive communication
- How to successfully work with Deaf clients and BSL interpreters.

3.5.6 A total number of 320 health visitors and other support staff attended the training course. 95% of the attendees found the course very useful and relevant and acquired better knowledge of working with D/deaf families and signposting to appropriate services for D/deaf children.

3.6 Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing

"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"

3.6.1 The Sensory Services area of Your Support Your Way Glasgow (YSYWG) has been updated to include information relevant to BSL service users around flu vaccinations and changes to hearing aid battery collection brought about by the pandemic.

3.6.2 The role of Deaf Peer Support Worker is to support a service user whose first language is BSL and who requires support from mental health services. The involves:

- Translation of tools and resources from English to BSL.
- Supporting patient activities and ensuring patients understand what has been conveyed by mental health professionals at their sessions
- Ensuring accessibility needs are being met across mental health services.

It is clear there has been challenges relating to communication support for Deaf patients, particularly in the context of mental health services. The expansion of the role of the Peer Support Worker (PSW) is promising, as it has the potential to improve access and support for Deaf individuals within NHSGGC. By addressing challenges, we need to produce and implement appropriate actions, so that NHSGGC can work towards providing more equitable and effective mental health support to Deaf individuals in their care. Several actions can be considered;

- Awareness Campaigns
- Streamlined Referral Process
- Training for Staff
- Patient Education
- Regular Feedback and Evaluation

3.6.3 The new advertising campaign by Lifelink targeted at the Deaf community in Glasgow has sparked positive results; from an October 2022 to September 2023 sample period, there has been 25 referrals to the service. This represented a 20% increase compared to the previous year. The uptake in referrals can be attributed to the successful campaign and increased awareness of LifeLink's services within the Deaf community. The inclusion of BSL translation in the animated video demonstrates a commitment to accessible communication, making it easier for Deaf individuals to understand the counselling process. The campaign's focus on the Deaf community living in Glasgow shows LifeLink's dedication to engaging with specific communities and addressing their unique needs.

3.6.4 Access routes to psychological therapies have been reviewed, including how BSL users can access at a local level and on a fair and equal basis. Two principal clinician psychologists from Stobhill Hospital applied to the NHSGGC Research Endowment Fund (Maximum of £15,000).

The purpose of the funding is to explore psychological therapies that are fully accessible and achieve healthy outcomes for BSL users. The research team has been recruiting for the past year, which has led to a number of learning opportunities for the study, particularly around understanding the needs of the Deaf community. NHSGGC then introduced a mobile phone text-in option for registering interest, which interested persons can now register interest in the study by e-mail, text, or a quick online form. Information about the study is available in written English and in video (with a BSL interpreter).

3.7 Transport

"BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland."

3.7.1 Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) are the public transport authority for Glasgow, as such GCC has a limited role in running public transport services. However, as one of the members of the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership, GCC will explore opportunities to encourage bus operators to offer BSL training to bus drivers as part of any Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) Scheme. GCC will continue via this Partnership and other relevant forums to lobby all transport operators in Glasgow to ensure BSL users are considered when providing services and information.

3.8 Culture and the Arts

"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"

3.8.1 A new BSL focused story continues develop at the Riverside Museum. This will be about Dr Gerry Hughes – an icon in the Scottish Deaf Community who was the first Deaf person to circumnavigate the globe on his own. The display will be in BSL with English translation and will focus on the ability to achieve anything you set your mind to. It has been developed with Dr Hughes. This display will be open in 2025 will be complemented with a public education and information programme.

3.8.2 Volunteer-led BSL tours of Glasgow Life Museums are scheduled to restart later in 2024. Additional guides are currently being recruited. These tours will begin in The Burrell.

3.8.3 BSL is included in audio/visual digital material across Glasgow Life Museums. BSL is also used in an online introduction to Glasgow Life Museums via the Glasgow Life website.

3.8.4 Around 30 Glasgow Life Museums staff have been trained in basic BSL by a local Deaf-led organisation. One staff member has a Level 6 BSL qualification.

3.8.5 BSL interpretating will be provided at the forthcoming World Athletics Indoor Championships taking place in Glasgow from 1 to 3 March 2024.

3.8.6 BSL will be offered at various Arts, Music and Cultural performances on an ad hoc basis.

3.9 Democracy

"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"

3.9.1 We promoted the Access to Elected Office Fund in all documentation for the Scottish Parliamentary and Local Government elections. We also included details for the fund in all of our nomination packs for any potential candidates.

3.9.2 BSL guides on how to register to vote were shared via GCC social media in the run up to the May 2021 and May 2022 elections; and will be provided in advance of any UK Parliamentary Election in 2024.

3.9.3 We continue to promote the involvement of BSL users in Community Councils. Sign Language Interactions (SLI) supported a Community Councillor with hearing impairment to attend and participate in a recent meeting.

4. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	The Scottish Government awarded a small amount of funding for implementing the action plan. It is anticipated that the plan will be implemented within existing resources.
Legal:	None
Personnel:	None
Procurement:	None

Council Strategic Plan:	94 – Consult with our citizens at the earliest stage on policy and service design, demonstrating how we have addressed their views. 99 - Work to deliver a fairer, more equal Glasgow.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	This report is directly related to the Equality Outcomes for 2021 to 2025.
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	It is expected that this action plan will have a positive impact on the BSL community. This will be monitored through the Equality Working Group and progress report
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	It is expected that this action plan will have a positive impact of the BSL community, who suffer socio economic disadvantage. BSL users are known to experience significant barriers to accessing services, information, employment and social security.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	None
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	None

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	None
Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:	None

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the update on key areas of activity during 2022/24.
- Note that this update will be shared with the British Deaf Association who are coordinating Local Authority updates on behalf of the Scottish Government.