

The impact of the BSL (Scotland) Act on deaf children and young people's education

Researchers:

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Previously worked together on a chapter about the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015



Research question

To what extent has the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 had a positive effect on the education of deaf children and young people in Scotland in their use of BSL?

Sources for documentary analysis

BSL plans

Submissions from consultations on BSL Bill and national plan

BSL Act Facebook sites

Deaf Teachers Group – Instant Messenger

BSL plans

Job descriptions of education staff

SQA data on exam entries in BSL

Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE) survey data

What did deaf people want?

- Initial findings
 - All (hearing) pupils to learn BSL at least to Level 1 / BSL to be a taught subject
 - More deaf schools to give deaf children more choice
 - Increase number of qualifications deaf children have when finish education
 - Improve quality of communication support professionals working in education
 - Prevent abuse of deaf children (3 to 4 times more likely to be abused than non-deaf)
 - Need to find out what type of abuse being referred to here
 - Language deprivation?



British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015

2015 asp 11

Explanatory Notes have been produced to assist in the
understanding of this Act and are available separately

£6.00

BSL (Scotland) Act 2015

- Aims to promote use and understanding of BSL (section 1(1))
- Requires the Scottish executive to prepare and publish a national plan in relation to BSL (section 1(2)), which is expected to set out Scottish Government's BSL strategy (section 1(3)(a)).
- Requires public authorities, defined as 'any body or office-holder (other than Scottish Ministers themselves) which is Scottish public authority with mixed functions or no reserved functions' (section 7)
 - to prepare and publish own BSL plans (section 2(1))
 - setting out measures to be taken in relation to the use of BSL (section 2(2)(a))

Analysis: De Meulder et al (2019); Wilks (2020)

National BSL Plan School education

16 More BSL teachers become registered with GTCS

17 Survey level of BSL for ToDs and support staff

18 GTCS guidance for teachers of BSL users

19 SQA develop initial awards to level 6 SCQF

20 / 21 Education Scotland: support for parents who use BSL

22 Parents who use BSL – consult about parental involvement

23 SCILT – programme of BSL for hearing pupils

24 Expert group BSL for hearing pupils

Only three points about deaf children



Local BSL plans

- Organisations *not* asked to make their own plans: SQA (exam board), Scottish Funding Council, Education Scotland, General Teaching Council of Scotland all argued that they comply with Equality Act 2010 so do not need – was accepted
- But these organisations all have Gaelic Language plans
- Evidence of lobbying from consultation at stage 2 of Bill
- A few points each in the National Plan

Examples of BSL plans

Colleges and universities

- Equality Act (2010) determines how deaf students are monitored, so language preferences / uses not included
- Some progressive plans
- More commitment to employ qualified BSL interpreters
- BDA work on apprenticeships with Skills Development Scotland
- University of Edinburgh plan comprehensive

Local authorities

- Many use the same template from COSLA
- Extreme caution and wait for government money and advice
- Some evidence of conflict (e.g. Perth)
- Wide consultation in some areas (e.g. Ayrshires)
- Deaf students / ToDs often uninformed (e.g. Midlothian)
- Promote use of SSE (Glasgow)

Scottish Qualifications Authority

Other

Edinburgh College BSL Plan



4. Short summary of the plan



contribute their ideas and suggestions to shape the start of Edinburgh College's Action Plan.

Perth and Kinross BSL Plan

By 2024, we will:

- [17 & 18] Help the Scottish Government with their work to find out the level of BSL held by teachers and support staff working with D/deaf and Deafblind pupils in schools. We will use any new guidance for teachers or support staff working with pupils who use BSL.

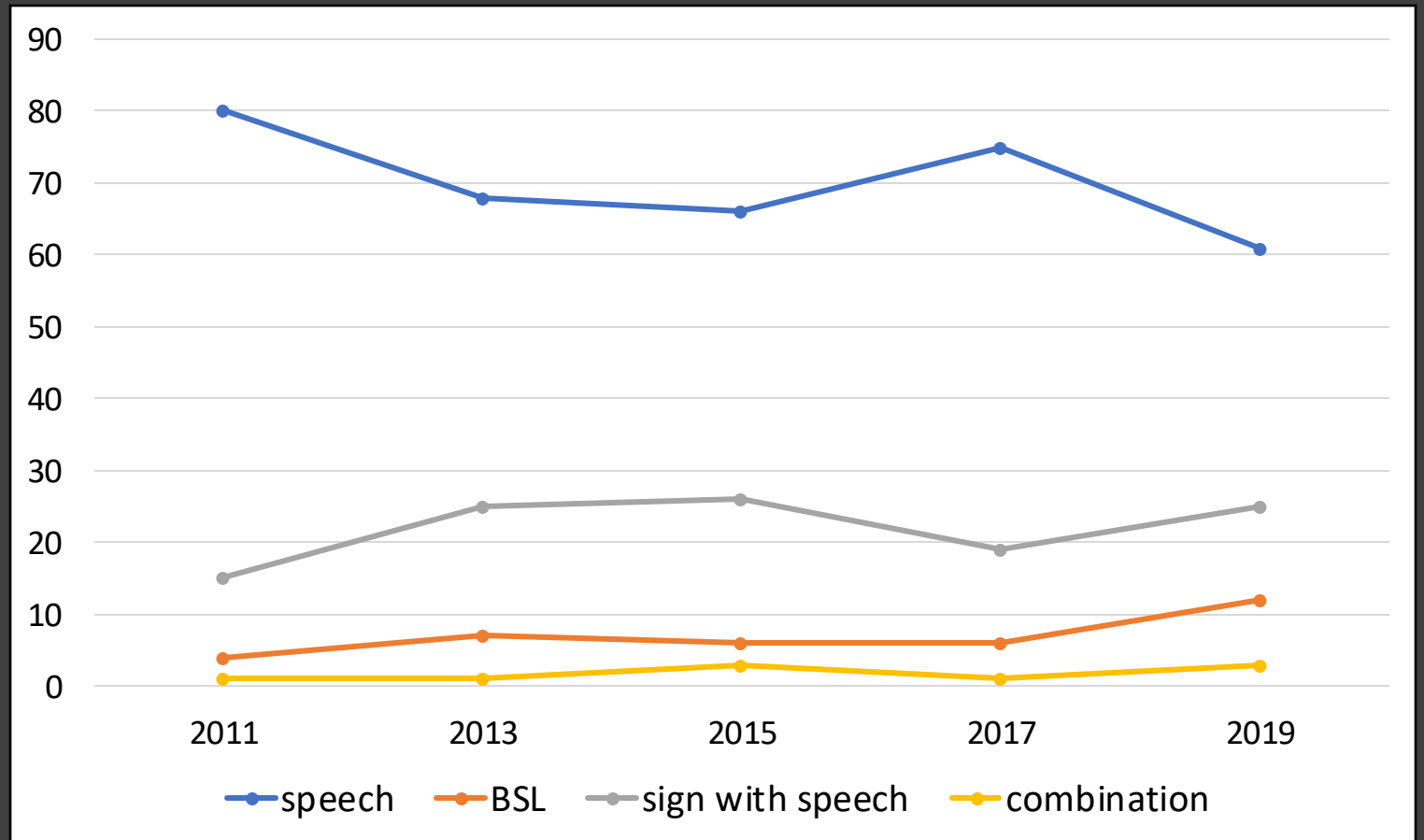
Currently within Perth and Kinross Hearing Support staff hold mandatory BSL qualifications at the required level. Education & Children's Services can provide appropriate BSL support to meet the needs of pupils using BSL. We note that BSL community members would like the level of qualification to be higher.

Language use in school

Languages used

CRIDE Scotland 2011 – 2019

2021 survey may reveal more



Fluency in BSL

17 Survey of BSL skills of ToDs 2016

by Scottish Sensory Centre

O'Neill, Ravenscroft, Wazny, 2017

Of the 185 ToDs

- 64% have Level 1 or more as required
- 9% have Level 3 or more which gives reasonable fluency



But of 174 ToDs,

- 57% were working with children who require BSL or SSE

Language use in school



Role Profile

Communication Support Worker			
Reference No.	A4018	Type	Individual
Service	Education		
Job Family	Para Professional 5	Grade	FC7

Purpose
To provide sign language interpreting in a variety of settings, assisting in the development of communication support services for deaf and professional support for staff.

Task or Responsibility - For this role, there is an expectation that all, or a combination, of the following will be undertaken:	Person Specification: Skills, Knowledge, Qualifications or Experience - Criteria can apply to more than one task or responsibility	E	D
Providing relevant confidential sign language communicating across a variety of settings.	Educated to SCQF level 6 which includes Highers or SVQ level 3 or equivalent (Deliver results)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Qualified in British Sign Language (BSL) to at least SCQF Level 10.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Member of SASLI/SRLPDC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Experience of supporting communication in a variety of settings (Embrace technology & information)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Ability to provide an efficient and effective service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Providing communication support to enable access to education and services for children, young people and their families.	Communication skills, interpretation of spoken and written English into BSL and BSL to English (Focus on customers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Providing sign language interpretation support to other members of the team and others.	Experience of developing and training others in use of BSL (Take ownership)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

E = Essential Criteria D = Desirable Criteria

Job descriptions

‘Nursery nurse’

CSW

Classroom assistant

Language use in school: Deaf school teachers who use fluent BSL

BSL-using deaf qualified school teachers

Six deaf BSL using teachers in Scotland: 4 since BSL Act in 2015

None are BSL subject specialists

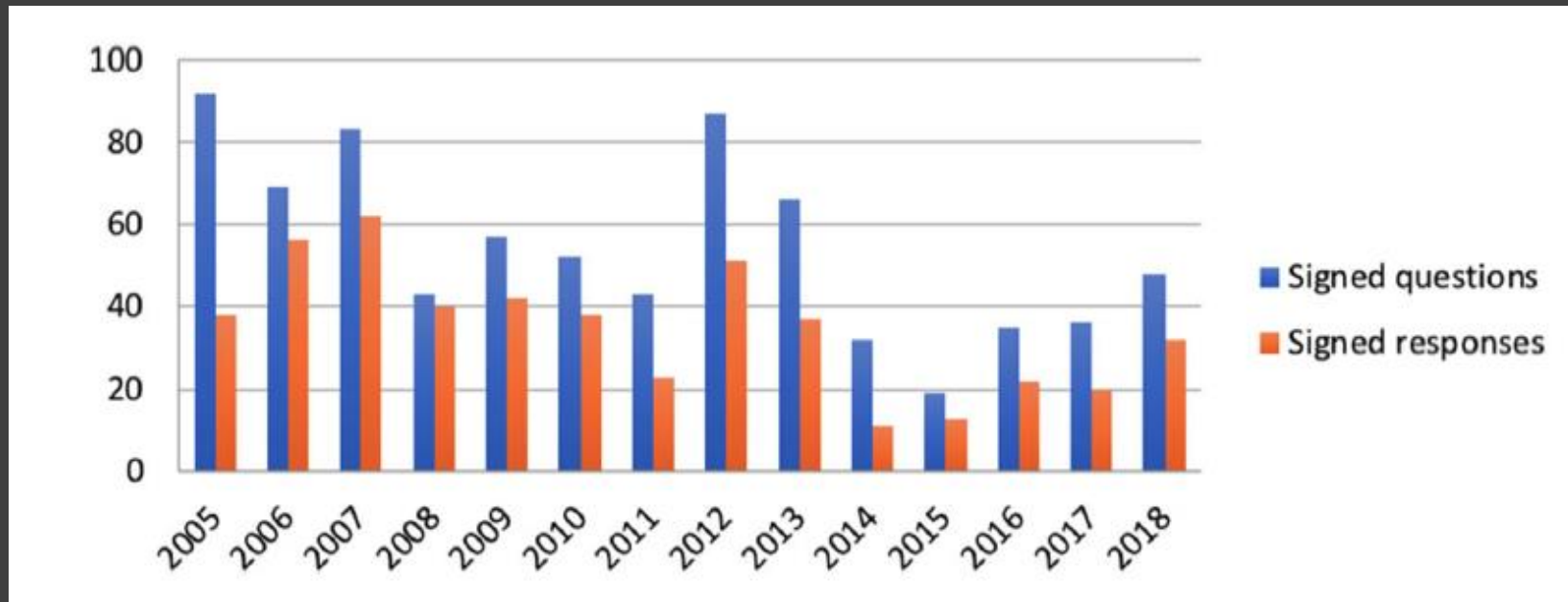
SQA needs 20 qualified secondary BSL teachers before it will have resources to produce and run National 5 and Higher BSL qualifications

Proposed Primary Education with BSL starts 2023 University of Edinburgh

Potential for a 1 year PGDE route to secondary BSL teaching

The right to take exams in BSL

Unique system in Scotland: the right to have a BSL exam paper in any subject except English, and to respond in BSL.



Numbers of deaf **BSL users in SQA exams**

Requests – SQA administrative data

SQA BSL units have been created

SCQF 3

SCQF 4

SCQF 5 – similar to Signature level 2

SCQF 6 – similar to Signature level 3

Creating a National 5 or a Higher examination needs about 20 qualified subject specialist school teachers



The screenshot shows the SQA website page for British Sign Language (BSL) National Units. The page has a dark blue navigation bar with links for Qualifications, Services, Past Papers, About SQA, and Support. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: Home > National Qualifications > Subjects > British Sign Language > British Sign Language (BSL) | National Units. The main content area features a yellow 'Select subject' dropdown menu, a dark blue 'National Qualifications' sidebar with links to NQ home, Subjects, National Qualifications in 2020-21, Baccalaureates, and Skills for Work, and a main heading 'British Sign Language (BSL) - National Units'. Below the heading are three images of a person in a red shirt demonstrating BSL hand signs. The text 'National Units' is followed by 'Available for SQA approved centres.' and a list of units: F8Y0 09 - British Sign Language: An Introduction - SCQF Level 3 and H3PA 10 - British Sign Language - SCQF Level 4.

Qualifications ▾ Services ▾ Past Papers About SQA Support ▾

[Home](#) > [National Qualifications](#) > [Subjects](#) > [British Sign Language](#) > British Sign Language (BSL) | National Units

Select subject ▾

British Sign Language (BSL) - National Units

National Qualifications

NQ home

Subjects

National Qualifications in 2020-21

Baccalaureates

Skills for Work

National Units

Available for SQA approved centres.

- F8Y0 09 - British Sign Language: An Introduction - SCQF Level 3
- H3PA 10 - British Sign Language - SCQF Level 4

Proposal from deaf education field: 50% of teachers of deaf children should have SCQF 6 or above by 2026.

Civil servant response: This all needs changed back to current level BLS level 1 and meet the child's need

Johnson & Johnson, 2015

**Education civil servants:
competencies for teachers of deaf children**

Lack of engagement with BSL Act and Plan

Lack of knowledge about BSL

Need to explore why

Analysis so far



Very slow change in the school system



COSLA and civil servants did not want to spend money on BSL users



Attitudes towards disability prevented them seeing language rights



ToD profession changing - Deaf president of BATOD, Deaf Studies course at University of Edinburgh



Prospect of more fluent ToDs and BSL teachers from 2024 onwards



Next steps



Apply for funding



Interview:

Civil servants

Deaf young people at school

ToDs

COSLA



Publish article



Respond to new National Plan (postponed to October 2021 from 2020)

References

- De Meulder, M., Murray, J.J. and McKee, R.L. eds., 2019. *The legal recognition of sign languages: Advocacy and outcomes around the world*. Multilingual Matters.
- Johnson, D.C. and Johnson, E.J., 2015. Power and agency in language policy appropriation. *Language Policy*, 14(3), pp.221-243.
- Wilks, R., 2020. *Making equality law work for Deaf people*. PhD Thesis. University of Leicester. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.25392/leicester.data.11806764.v1>.

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