

British Sign Language (BSL) Toolkit for Practitioners

Section 5

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5. Key national legislation and standards

This section provides an overview of the key national legislation and documents relating to the involvement, engagement and communication of all parents, families and communities. These provide the overarching framework within which local authorities, early learning and childcare settings, schools and practitioners should work.

Practitioners should be aware that British Sign Language users may not have access to the following national legislation and standards. Reasons for this could be because:

- British Sign Language was usually not used at school when Deaf parents attended themselves.
- Up until 2005, Deaf children were usually diagnosed from 18 months to 3 years ([Hearing tests for newborns](#)). This means that most Deaf adults today did not have any support for early language development. **Any literacy difficulties are therefore not to do with being Deaf, they are to do with the way that society supports Deaf children (or not) in the early years.**

Providing a copy of documents in [Easy Read](#) or British Sign Language translation would help empower Deaf parents to know their rights and responsibilities. Further information on newborn screening can be found [here](#).

5.1 Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act (2006)

In 2006, the [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act](#) came into force. Within the Act, Scottish Ministers and local authorities have a duty to promote the involvement and engagement of parents in their child's Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting (e.g. nursery, playgroup or childminder) or school and their learning. The Parental Involvement Act (2006) recognises the benefits of involving parents in the wider life of the ELC setting or school and the vital role they play in supporting their children's learning. Providing and strengthening the framework to support parental involvement and engagement is therefore a key focus of the Act. Parents are encouraged to express their views and have these taken into account not just on matters affecting the education of their children but also the school's arrangements for promoting parental involvement and engagement, as well as other matters or issues of interest or concern to parents.

Enabling parents who use BSL to have the same opportunities as other parents to be fully involved in their child's education is also a goal within the British Sign Language [National Plan](#) (2017-23) (p12, School Education goals 16-24).

BSL users can access signed video content on how to engage in education on the [Parentzone Scotland](#) website.

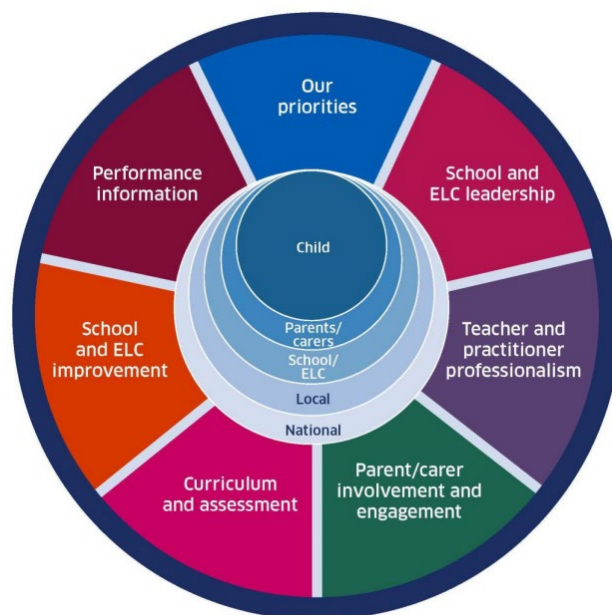
5.2 National Improvement Framework

The [National Improvement Framework](#) was established in 2015 and it sets out a clear vision for Scottish education based on delivering excellence and equity. It has the following four priorities:

- **improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy**
- closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people
- improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

To deliver this improvement, six 'drivers' were identified. These are:

- School and ELC leadership
- **Teacher and practitioner professionalism**
- **Parent/carer involvement and engagement**
- Curriculum and assessment
- School and ELC improvement
- Performance information.



5.3 National Improvement Framework Parent Communication Plan (2016)

The Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework [Parent Communication Plan](#) (2016) sets out six principles that should underpin all communication with Deaf and hearing parents, carers and families. Being conscious of the different needs and preferences of Deaf and hearing parents and asking them how and when they would like to communicate is key to building trusting relationships. The principles were developed in partnership with national parenting organisations, and they capture examples of good practice in communicating with Deaf and hearing parents. Although this is a national communications plan, the principles are relevant at a local authority and school level.

The principles are:

- simplicity and clarity
- transparency
- relevance
- partnership
- flexibility and adaptation
- timeliness

The National Improvement Framework Parent Communication Plan (2016) focuses on three key priorities. These are:

- Priority 1 Explaining what the National Improvement Framework is, why it has been developed and where it is relevant to parents
- Priority 2 Answering the questions that are most important to parents and families
- Priority 3 **Supporting good quality dialogue between parents, teachers and Headteachers**

5.4 British Sign Language National Plan (2017–2023)

The [British Sign Language National Plan](#) (2017-2023) sets out ten long-term goals for Scotland. These cover:

- Accessibility of Information and Services to British Sign Language users
- Family Support, Early Learning and Childcare
- **School Education**
- Post School Education
- Training, Work and Social Security
- Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Transport
- Culture and the Arts
- Justice
- Democracy



Summaries of progress on BSL plans for public bodies in Scotland are available [here](#). Additionally, an independent report on 'The impact of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 on Deaf education' is available [here](#). This report aimed to contribute to the [review](#) of the first national BSL (National Plan). It acts as a discussion point for parents, teachers, organisations and Deaf young people themselves about what changes the Act has so far made in relation to their education.

5.5 General Teaching Council for Scotland – Professional Standards

The General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTC Scotland) has developed [professional standards](#) that are required of all registered teachers. Within these standards, professional values are included. These values include a professional commitment to social justice, trust and respect and a commitment to taking the individual need of the child or young person into account (see below).

- Committing to social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive, and sustainable policies and practices in relation to protected characteristics, (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation) and intersectionality.
- Demonstrating a commitment to motivating, and including all learners, understanding the influence of gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds on experiences of learning, taking account of specific learning needs and seeking to reduce barriers to learning.

In fulfilment of Action 18 of the national BSL Plan, GTC Scotland produced a professional guide for teachers on 'Teaching and Supporting'. This resource is available on their [website](#).