

All Our Rights In Law: Report on the conversations held with people across the four pillars of deafness

Background

The Scottish Government's National Taskforce on Human Rights Civil Society Reference Group is looking at the development of a new human rights law for Scotland that is informed by the views and experiences of rights-holders, particularly those whose rights are often denied.

As a first step in the development process, the **Human Rights Consortium** and the **Scottish Human Rights Commission** are working with civil society organisations to host conversations about what this new law could look like. Once the conversations have taken place, the Human Rights Consortium and the Scottish Human Rights Commission will collate views from these conversations to help to inform the National Taskforce's final recommendations. They will also publish a report of people's views, to help inform the Scottish Government's next steps.

A **new human rights law** could include rights like:

- The right to adequate, accessible and affordable food
- The right to adequate housing
- The right to the highest level possible of physical and mental health
- The right to a social security safety net
- The right to take part in cultural life
- The right to a healthy environment
- Specific rights for disabled people, women, black and minority ethnic people, older people and LGBTI people

They produced **five questions** to be used to guide the conversations:

1. What difference do you think it would make to have these rights written into Scotland's laws? Your answer can be about one of the rights, some of them, or all of them.
2. Are there any people or communities whose rights seem particularly at risk?
3. What does government need to do to make sure this new human rights law makes a real difference to people's lives?
4. Everyone will be able to use this new law to claim their human rights. What kind of practical information, support or resources do you think people in your community will need to do this?
5. What is your final message to the National Taskforce and the Scottish Government?

The four pillars of deafness

deafscotland uses the four pillars of deafness to describe the spectrum of deafness: **Deaf/Deaf BSL users; Deafblind; Deafened; and Hard of Hearing**. <https://deafscotland.org/>

Deaf/Deaf Sign Language users are people whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL), or another Sign Language if they grew up in another country. These people have been born deaf or have become deaf early in life. People with this level of deafness are described as being profoundly deaf. Deaf BSL users usually see themselves as part of a linguistic/cultural minority known as the Deaf Community.

Deafblindness is sometimes called dual sensory loss. This is because deafblind people will have both some hearing loss and some sight loss. A person can be born deafblind (called congenital deafblindness) or lose both their hearing and sight in later life. It is important to remember that many deafblind people may not be totally deaf nor totally blind. People who are Deafblind may have Usher Syndrome (<https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/information-and->

[advice/conditions/usher-syndrome/](#)) and use BSL until their sight decreases to the point where they can no longer see someone signing to them. Their understanding of what is being said to them is done through tactile (hands-on) BSL. Deafblind people whose first language has been English may rely on Deafblind Manual to understand what is being said to them.

People who were born able to hear and become severely deaf after learning to speak are often described as **Deafened** or as having an **acquired profound hearing loss (APHL)**. This hearing loss may be due to a disease or illness or there may not be an identified reason for the loss of the person's hearing. Deafened people may rely on lipreading to follow a conversation or need to have things written down for them. If arranging a meeting or appointment with a person who is Deafened, it is important to find out what support they need, for example, an Electronic Notetaker or a Lip Speaker.

Hard of Hearing is a term used to describe people with a **mild to moderate hearing loss**. People who are Hard of Hearing will, in general, lose their hearing gradually and the majority of Hard of Hearing people do so later in their lives. A person with a mild hearing loss might wear a hearing aid and have some difficulty in following conversations in noisy situations. A person with a moderate hearing loss might have one or two hearing aids and will have difficulty following normal speech without the aid. For meetings, face-to-face or online, the person who is hard of hearing may need an Electronic Notetaker as well as a hearing induction loop.

Summary

“Blindness cuts us off from things, but deafness cuts us off from people” – Helen Keller

deafscotland held four conversations online – 50 people attended. 12 people filled in a questionnaire as they could not take part in the online conversations.

From the discussions that took place, it is clear that people know the titles of **legislation** passed in both Scotland and Great Britain, but they do not understand what the law means or how they can use it. deafscotland has recognised this as an issue that needs to be addressed for a very long time and it is part of our Communication For All campaign based on the Principles of Inclusive Communication. Communication is a basic human right. If people are not given information in a way they understand it at the time they need it, then they do not understand what it means to be a rights holder or what they can expect of duty bearers and the legislation has failed at its first hurdle. If the Scottish Government had an **Inclusive Communication Strategy that applied to all legislation, guidance and information** then the people of Scotland would be better placed to understand and use the legislation that is already in place without the need for more.

Too often, people think that **accessible information** is all that Inclusive Communication is about. **Inclusive Communication** is a two way process of understanding others and expressing yourself. It is about a change in attitude across society, by governments where we work, spend our leisure time, the communities we live in. It is about asking what the people in your community need to understand the messages you are putting out; thinking about how best to meet these needs with the resources you have access to; and then communicating effectively. **Accessible information is a tool** to help make inclusive communication happen.

There is a need for a **national deaf awareness campaign** fronted by government. Too many people affected by deafness – deaf people themselves, their families and supporters – are left facing barriers on a daily basis that could be broken down if only the Scottish people were

more aware of these barriers and the solutions to them. If more people understood how to communicate with people who are affected by deafness, then many of the communication barriers could be minimised and the issues that have arisen during lockdown may have been much less. There are many **messages** that need to be given to the people of Scotland so that **they can protect their hearing**, especially with the increase in digital technology where people are wearing ear buds and headphones for longer periods of time. Younger people are losing their hearing faster than before because of their use of modern technology. There needs to be a **public campaign** that tells people of all ages how to **look after their hearing** as once it goes, there is little that can be done to support people to hear and minimise the damage they do to their hearing. Unfortunately, too many people do not look after their hearing and it is only once they develop a hearing loss, do they realise they could have done more to reduce their loss.

Deafness is the **last “invisible” disability**. It is still thought acceptable in many situations to **use phrases** such as “falling on deaf ears” or “as deaf as a post” to refer to people who are not very bright or who deliberately ignore others. All other phrases about disability that were once used in everyday language have been ditched, but on TV, radio, in the media and even in the Scottish Parliament, these phrases are still heard. People affected by deafness are trying hard to be active citizens in Scotland and **this form of discrimination** needs to come to an end. There is still a **stigma** to telling people that you cannot hear what they are saying to you and to wearing hearing aids. It can take **up to 10 years** for someone who starts to notice they are not hearing as well as they could to go get their hearing checked. Part of this is the **attitude of others – the “jokes”** that all people affected by deafness have to put up with; the **lack of understanding**; the **lack of visible deaf people** on TV, in the media, on film (not just Deaf BSL users but also younger people who are Deafened or very Hard of Hearing). Too often, hearing people do not want to have to put up with subtitles on films or on TV, even though they use them for /films where the language is not their first or

preferred language. It is not something that just affects older adults, hearing loss can happen at any age and, due to the increase use of personal technology, will happen much more to younger people too.

As well as attitudinal barriers, people affected by deafness face **physical barriers to inclusion** in society. The acoustics in many buildings are not helpful when trying to communicate with others

The **move to a more digital society** has benefited many people affected by deafness, but not all. Where people already have access to broadband and technology, meeting online during the Covid-19 lockdowns has prevented increased isolation and allowed people to keep in touch with family, friends and for those in work or education, their colleagues and fellow students. For those people who are not “online” either through choice or circumstances, the move online has meant an increase in isolation, a breakdown in mental health and a lack of support as what has been highlighted during the lockdowns is that so many support services still rely on telephony as their main means of contact.

Lockdowns for Covid-19 have intensified the sense of isolation and lack of accessible, inclusive support available through mainstream services for those affected by deafness. Deafness, by its very nature, is isolating and can cause a breakdown in the person’s mental health as they try to come to terms with a lack of hearing in a hearing world. The majority of mainstream services are not deaf aware nor do they have budgets to provide accessible services – with language/communication support – so deaf people may have to rely on deaf organisations which have had to cut back on face-to-face support and rely more on technology. Deafblind people who need hands-on language support have been particularly badly effected as there are less guide/communicators available due to home schooling, a lack of support service provision and workers becoming unwell.

deafscotland’s conversations

General issues

From the discussions that took place, it is clear that people know the titles of **legislation** passed in both Scotland and Great Britain, but they do not understand what the law means or how they can use it. This is something that the Scottish Council for Deafness and now deafscotland (trading name for the Scottish Council on Deafness) has been saying for many years. If people **do not understand the legislation and how it relates to them**, it is not surprising that more people do not use the law to make sure goods, information and services are planned, implemented and delivered in a way that suits them. For example, the Equality Act 2010 was mentioned at one session and most of those attending the session did not understand how this Act could help them in their everyday lives. The Human Rights Act 1998 is not real to many people and so they do not understand how it could help them be more active in their citizenship in Scotland. This is not just an issue for deaf people in Scotland, but for its hearing citizens too. If laws are not explained to the people who live and work in the country where the law is passed, the people cannot use the law in the way it is intended by the law makers. This is equally true of Scots Law and legislation that is reserved.

There needs to be a **greater understanding of the four pillars of deafness** and the language used to describe deafness across the whole population in Scotland. From the different deaf conversations, there appears to be a lack of awareness of the language/communication needs of each of the pillars by the other pillars as well as the perception that hearing people do not understand the differences between the needs of those in the four pillars. It was suggested that there should be a national deaf awareness campaign led by the Scottish Government to ensure that people in Scotland understand what it means to be deaf in a hearing world.

Issues raised across the four pillars of deafness

Covid – 19

Loss of independence – many people have found that they are losing their independence especially during lockdown. Too many services relying on telephone contact and people not willing to remove their masks so that people can lip read has left deaf people having to rely on friends and family to relay information and messages to them. Deaf people with no friends or family living close are feeling particularly isolated and lonely which is impacting on their mental health and physical health as they are less likely to leave the house to exercise.

Rehabilitation – all the **face-to-face lipreading classes** have stopped due to lockdown, so people affected by deafness who are at the start of their rehabilitation journey have been left struggling with new hearing aids and no way of learning to lip read. This has reduced people's independence, increased their **general isolation** and caused problems with **their mental health** that are not being addressed. It is a bit of a postcode lottery depending on which deaf organisations have funding to provide mental health support and which mainstream mental health organisations are deaf aware and can provide accessible services.

Information sessions on the television – at the First Minister's **daily information sessions**, a **BSL/English Interpreter was available** to interpret the daily Covid-19 message. At times, the Interpreters **were not on screen due to camera angles**. There appears to be a **lack of understanding** by some of the BBC **camera crews** as to how film interpreted speeches.

The BBC showed the Prime Minister's daily messages but with no interpreter. **BSL interpretation was added** to the messages later and were **available online**, but for those people who are **not online or have a limited data source**, they missed out on the Prime Minister's messages. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 has made a difference to the information that is available to Deaf BSL users in Scotland, but there

remain **messages on reserved matters** that are not being interpreted and so Deaf BSL users are not receiving the information at the same time as those whose first or preferred language is English – **employment and business information**, for example.

Masks/social distancing – deaf people recognise that **masks keep people safe** but they are a **huge hindrance to communication** for people affected by deafness. Even though the guidance says that people can **remove their masks** to allow people **to lipread**, few are willing to do this. People affected by deafness who rely on lipreading (which is most people even if they do not normally realise it) are being left unable to understand what is being said to them in shops, cafes, health and social care settings. **Little is being done** to make sure deaf people are getting the same service/messages as their hearing peers. **Hearing aids** only amplify sound that is **no more than 1 metre away**, so social distancing for many has increased the isolation they feel when out and about. They cannot hear what the other person is saying when that person is 2 metres away – even if it was perfectly quiet round about them – but with background noise, which can be as little as a gentle wind, communication is reduced to guesswork and nodding.

Access to health – contact with GPs and other health professionals has been more difficult than usual during lockdown as people affected by deafness can no longer go along to their GP surgeries and health centres to make appointments or access information. The reliance on the telephone to contact patients has made access for deaf people extremely difficult and has exacerbated new and existing conditions due to stress. For example, during the first lockdown, Audiology Departments were closed and the community support services for hearing aid batteries, services and repairs were not available. For some, that meant a 9 – 10 month wait without their hearing aids to support the person's day-to-day communication. As people affected by deafness are more isolated from society by their deafness, having no communication

support meant even greater isolation and a lack of support for their mental health due to the reliance on telephone contact by organisations.

Everyday issues raised

Recognition of the person's deafness and language – deaf people want **forms to be changed** so that there is a recognition that **not everyone can use the telephone and not everyone has English** as their first or preferred language. With more resources available online, it should be easier for forms to be adjusted to reflect the person's lack of hearing and use of a language other than English, but too many organisations do not see the benefits of this inclusion, or seem to understand how to make forms more inclusive.

Rehabilitation – People who become Deafened or very Hard of Hearing and need **lip reading classes** are not getting the support they need as there are fewer and fewer lip reading tutors available to take classes. Too often, lip reading classes are **not funded as rehabilitation** but are seen as extracurricular activity. In some areas in Scotland, there are very few lip reading classes available and most tend to be during the day, which do not suit people who are working. There is also a need for more **peer support for people who have lost their hearing** – people who already know how to cope, how to find solutions to problems, who know how to make partners/families more deaf aware. Again, some areas of Scotland have a good support network, but in others, there is little or no support.

Telephone access – **too many** organisations, businesses and public bodies **still rely too much on the telephone** for contact. Some deaf people can use a telephone if it is a direct line – telephone to telephone, but those who can hear, have difficulty when the call comes through a switchboard/online connection. It sounds like the person on the other end of the line is down a very deep well and shouting – distorted and echoing. For those who are computer literate and have the equipment,

they would prefer email or webchat but few organisations use email/webchat for personal details as they are not considered safe. The Scottish Government has invested in “Near Me”, a video consulting service that enables people to attend appointments from home or wherever is convenient. The service is being used across NHS Scotland for health and care appointments, and yet too many GPs seem unaware of the service and how it can support people who lip read by allowing the person to see the GP/health professional as they are speaking. Add in live captions and all health appointments that do not need an examination could be more accessible where the person affected by deafness is online and has the necessary technology. **Smarter use of technology for contact** needs to be considered for everyone.

Broadband/mobile access – there are still a significant number of people in Scotland who **do not have reliable broadband or mobile signals**. For deaf people, this can mean that they have no way of contacting friends, family and service providers, which **can put them and their families at risk**. This is **not a problem solely in rural and very rural areas**, but **also in areas close to towns and cities**. For example, in a number of areas in the west of the county of Angus within 3- 5 miles of Dundee, there is only access to an O2 mobile signal, so if a person’s phone provider is not sharing the O2 mast, there is no signal to phone, text or use online services.

Access to cultural events – too many **cultural events are not accessible** due to the cost of providing language/communication support. Even when deaf people ask for this, it is too often **cost that is quoted as being the reason for not making events accessible**. There was no financial benefit with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 as it is an enabling act. The finances made available for “reasonable adjustment” under the Equality Act 2010 would have covered BSL before the 2015 Act and it was decided that this money would cover interpretation after the 2015 Act. “Reasonable adjustment” would cover Electronic Notetaking as well. It would seem that it works in some Council areas,

but not all; and in some cultural areas within council remits, but is not consistently applied across councils or Scotland.

Access to technology – while access to technology has been a boon to many deaf people, there are many older deaf people, especially women, **who are not online at all** and do not have the necessary skills to join the digital age. They did not use computers in their jobs and have not had the opportunity or even the inclination to learn how to use computers or smartphones in their retirement. As more and more organisations and businesses move online, there are people being left behind which **impacts on their mental health and sense of isolation**. Covid-19 has meant that more and more people are using online platforms for formal work meetings as well as meetings with friends and family. The **captions that come with most online platforms** mean that many deaf people cannot follow what is said as these captions are **not “dialect friendly”**.

Access to health and safety – Too often, the health and safety needs of deaf people are ignored. In some work situations, more effort is made to make sure **fire alarms are visual**, but **toilets/washrooms/shower rooms are ignored**. A person may be given a **vibrating alarm**, but if these are **not tested and updated** on a regular basis, they are of little use and could **actually be dangerous**. Deaf people on holiday in hotels are often given a **pad to put under their pillow** that vibrates when an alarm goes off, but what happens if they are **in the toilet or in the shower** or in a public toilet? Buildings are **made accessible** for people with a **physical disability** but rarely is the same consideration given to **those who cannot hear** and to those who have language/communication support needs.

Even when buildings have the necessary visual alarms, too often the companies that fit and test them **only have a telephone number** for contact.

“From February 2021, every home must have a smoke alarm in the living room and in circulation spaces such as hallways and

landings; a heat alarm in every kitchen; all alarms ceiling mounted and interlinked; and a carbon monoxide alarm where there are fixed combustion appliances such as boilers and wood burners. The new rules mean the standard which currently applies to private rented property and new-builds is being extended to all homes in Scotland.” (<https://www.gov.scot/policies/fire-and-rescue/home-fire-safety/#:~:text=We%20are%20introducing%20new%20standards,such%20as%20hallways%20and%20landings&text=a%20carbon%20monoxide%20alarm%20where,as%20boilers%20and%20wood%20burners>)

Deaf people are being told that they need to do this then add on visual alarms as well. It would seem that the **advice being given is discriminatory** as deaf people will have **to pay for two alarm systems** rather than **one system that is accessible for everyone** – with noise and visual alarms.

Burglar alarms do not come with visual alarms as standard either. Too many deaf people are sold burglar alarms that are not of any use to them as they cannot hear them go off and there is no visual element to them.

New builds are being passed by Building Control and being **given completion warrants without having alarms that are accessible for deaf people. Few architects** are trained in designing buildings that are fully accessible for disabled people. This is **an additional qualification** that architects **can choose** to take, but most do not. Disability awareness training should be standard as **it is a basic human right to feel safe and secure** in your home, education, work and leisure and how can that be for deaf people when buildings do not cater for their health and safety needs. Technology needs to be included in **new builds and in refurbished buildings**. For example, **loop systems** should be included in all buildings as standard and **acoustics** should be looked at as this benefits not just people affected by deafness but others who use the spaces too. Communication is important in all spaces but too often **spaces are not designed with communication in mind**, and they need to be. Visual signage should also be used. It is becoming more common

to see Braille on doors and noticeboards as well as colour used to designate different areas. The same consideration should be given to rolling script and information on screen in BSL.

Deaf people would like **one place they can go to get all the technology they need** – rather than having to rely on social work for some things, private suppliers for other things, and public bodies like the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for advice and information. Too often they have to go to a number of different places and information is not available or accessible.

Access to transport – there are a number of issues for people affected by hearing loss who **have to use public transport** or rely on services. For example, on buses, passengers have to be able **to tell the driver where they are going** so that they can pay the correct fare or receive free travel with a concession card. More often than not, the **driver is not deaf aware**, there is lots of background noise, there may impatient passengers, and there is a Perspex screen between the passenger and driver which can contort lip patterns and distort sound. In stations and termini, there is often **few visible cues** as to what platform buses/trains are leaving from. Most still rely on **audible information systems** to tell passengers of delays and changes of platforms. On buses, trains and ferries, there is little visual information. When there is rolling script, too often it not working or is faulty. Ticket offices **may offer a loop system**, but too often this is not tested and staff do not know how to operate it. **Access to parking** can require the driver to speak into **an intercom** or if the car park is open, then if the driver needs assistance, the only way of getting it is again to use an intercom. Few car parks have any **visual methods of entry or support**. On motorways, there are telephones available to call for help; again, no visual support is available.

Lack of choice – **Deaf people in general** feel let down by mainstream services, which has become more obvious during the Covid-19 pandemic. There is more information available now about how to get support to stay healthy, remain in good mental health, connected with

your communities, but it is inaccessible to deaf people as contact is by telephone only.

People who are Deafened or very Hard of Hearing have an issue with **Electronic Notetaking**; there is a need for more Notetakers but there is also a need for people to **use technology** in a different way including using **speech to text software** to ensure inclusive communication. Too often, people think that if they write something down, the deaf person will know what is going on – but that is reliant on the person having good handwriting and grammar.

Consultation and participation – people affected by deafness would like to have the same opportunities as their hearing peers to be involved in the design, planning and delivery of goods, information and services in Scotland. **They do not want “special” events** that are just for deaf people; they want to be able to attend the same meetings and events as everyone else can. It is now standard for events and consultations to take place in venues that have ramps instead of steps; accessible toilets and changing places; disabled parking at the door; and be on public transport routes. How often do these events have Electronic Notetakers, BSL/English Interpreters and Guide/Communicators as well as working loop systems in place?

Issue raised by people who are Deafened or very Hard of Hearing

People who are Deafened or very Hard of Hearing would like to see the **See Hear Strategy** - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/see-hear/> - doing the same to support them as the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 is doing to support BSL users. They feel that they have been left behind and although most understand the need for the BSL (Scotland) Act, they think that much more could be done to support their rehabilitation and place in society.

Issues raised that are specific to Deaf and Deafblind British Sign Language Users

There was a discussion about how Deaf and Deafblind BSL users “fit” more with the **social model of disability** than the medical model. Most Deaf BSL users do not see themselves as disabled as they have their own language – BSL – and with that, their own history and culture. But they do recognise that hearing people see them as disabled due to their lack of hearing and so prefer the social model of disability rather than being defined by their deafness.

Deaf people whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL) do not think that the Equality Act 2010 enables them to have equality with other deaf people or with hearing people as there is nothing in the Act that refers to them and their language. This is one of the reasons that the **British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015** was put forward as a Private Member’s Bill. The protected characteristic of race which gives equality of access to culture and language does not apply to Deaf BSL users as they are not one ethnic group; and while disability allows for “reasonable adjustment”, Deaf BSL users **do not see themselves as disabled** as they have their own language and culture. No other group has to use “reasonable adjustment” to access their language and culture. BSL is not an accessible form of English in the same way as Easy Read or Braille, but is a language in its own right.

The Deaf people who attended the conversation thought that people who are Deafened or Hard of Hearing are more likely to know what the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010 mean as they understand English and there has been **limited information** produced in Scotland in BSL **to explain these Acts**. There is a misunderstanding in the hearing population that BSL is the same wherever it is used; when in fact, BSL has dialects and regional variations in the same way a spoken language does. Information produced in BSL in London will not necessarily be understood in the north east of Scotland, in the same way as many Aberdeenshire people struggle with a London accent and the other way

around; London people struggle to understand a native Aberdeenshire accent.

It was stated on several occasions during the conversation that the piece of legislation that has made the greatest difference to the understanding of Deaf BSL users is the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. Information is now available in BSL that never was before. More services are providing BSL interpretation, for example, cultural services – theatres, museums, art galleries, sports venues, music venues. Cinemas are providing subtitles films but not with BSL interpretation.

Keeping culture alive – technology has caused a number of Deaf Clubs to close as members can now contact each other online and no longer want to get together every weekend. Or deaf organisations are cutting back on their services and no longer have a free space for the Deaf Clubs to meet. Deaf culture was kept alive in the Deaf Clubs. Many **Deaf BSL users fear their culture and history will be lost without these clubs.**

Many of the Deaf BSL users who attended thought that since deaf children now go to, in the main, mainstream schools rather than deaf schools and with the growth of social media, they then remain on the outside of the Deaf Community rather than being part of it as used to happen before online resources were available. Those attending thought **something has been lost in the sense of community and belonging.**

Education - those attending thought that parents of deaf children no longer have the same choice for their children – to be taught in BSL or to be taught orally with some BSL. Donaldsons' School in Linlithgow started to take children with a range of communication support needs as there were fewer deaf children attending the “deaf school”.

All agreed that **deaf children should have access to BSL from pre-school/nursery onwards** so that as they get older, these children have a real choice in which language(s) they use. Even children who receive a

cochlear implant(s), should be taught to sign as they are still deaf children when they take their processor off.

Hearing children need to learn to sign from pre-school too. This would mean that deaf children have a greater peer group as well as making it easier for people to communicate with Deaf/Deafblind BSL users they may meet later in life. It may also encourage more adults to go further in their learning of BSL and to a greater level.

Teacher training - for hearing teachers so that they can achieve a higher level of BSL in order to teach deaf children in BSL should be available so that deaf children have the language skills they will need as they get older – signing and English – so they can pass exams and get qualifications and achieve all they can in employment.

Role models – most of the Deaf BSL users who attended said that they would like to see more Deaf BSL role models being visible on a daily basis – teaching in schools, in the media, online and in everyday situations – so that deaf children and young people get to know and understand Deaf Culture and BSL.

Access to language – there is no dictionary that is available to Deaf BSL users that is English /BSL. Many Deaf BSL users think this makes it harder for them to understand information available in English. There is also a lack of general information in BSL – what Councils do, what their basic rights are – in health, social care, banks, education, and every day information. Access to interpreters has, in some circumstances, become harder as systems and processes change to reflect today's thinking.

Lack of choice - Many of the Deaf BSL users who attended the conversation are frustrated at the lack of choice they have on a daily basis. TV programmes that have BSL interpretation are on terrestrial TV in the middle of the night; there are few mainstream programmes available with interpretation during the day/evening. If a person has limited access to online services, they have very limited access to TV in their own language. Subtitles are not seen as a standard that should be

on all TV programmes and films. Too often online media relies on “built-in” captions which are not “dialect friendly” so do not make sense for those who need them.

People acknowledged that having access to contactSCOTLAND-BSL has made a difference to their access to mainstream services, but some felt that there should be more choice than using only one service. Some of those who attended would like to see more BSL/English Interpreters so that there is a greater choice of language professionals available. Others would like to see more hearing people learning BSL up to Level 6 so that they can provide direct services in BSL.

What are your final messages to the National Taskforce and the Scottish Government?

Everyone who attended the conversations want **Inclusive Communication to be at the heart of the work of the National Taskforce, Scottish Government and any new Human Rights Bill.** Work needs to be person-centred and rights-based with communication being seen as a basic human right. **Inclusive Communication** is essential if **each citizen in Scotland is to understand and access all their human rights.** Public bodies need to respect people’s language/communication support needs in order that the **duty bearers ensure that the rights holders access their rights in a timely manner.** Inclusive Communication **is not about** disability; it is about how **we all communicate with each other at all times** and the Scottish Government should be leading the way forward on this.

There should be a **national deaf awareness campaign** which includes teaching children how to protect their hearing. This campaign need to be **led by government** and be **inclusive of all four pillars of deafness,** the barriers people face, the discrimination brought by attitude to deafness, and provide practical support in language/communication.

