

24 January 2024

Dear

ATISN 20029 - AB – Disability Rights Taskforce

Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on 22 December 2023. You asked for:
Copies of information from the Disability Rights Task Force and its working groups which discusses British Sign Language.

Our response

The information you requested is enclosed.

The Welsh Government established the Disability Rights Taskforce, which brings together people with lived experience, Welsh Government policy leads and representative organisations to identify the issues and barriers that affect the lives of many disabled people.

The Disability Rights Taskforce and its working groups are ongoing. Many of the meetings have referenced the broader need for more accessible information, which would capture British Sign Language without specifically mentioning it.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Disability Rights Taskforce meetings

From Meeting 3 - Disability Rights Taskforce – Minutes

Date: 29 June 2022

During the part of the meeting where Ministerial activities are discussed, the following was shared:

1.3 MSJ (Minister for Social Justice) summarised some of her recent contributions and involvement as MSJ. She informed group members of her attendance at the Official launch to the Deaf People Wales: Hidden Inequality report in May 2022, which was published in October 2021 where she highlighted the work of the Taskforce to improve use of BSL in how Welsh Government communicates with the public and the establishment of an Access to Services working group to overcome barriers and improve access to information which could allow Welsh Government to develop a planned development path approach to the eventual goal of a combines communications rights-based system.

From Meeting 4 - Disability Rights Taskforce Meeting – Minutes

Date: 27 October 2022

The chair of the Access to Services working group provided the group with an update and shared the following:

2.9. Officials are working to ensure that these groups have correct representation from teams and organisations going forward. It was noted that an invitation was sent to [representative] of British Deaf Association who undertook the BSL Audit.

2.10. The group are considering relevant recommendations from the ‘Locked Out’ report and are using them to inform an objective setting exercise.

2.11. Most of the discussion of the working group was around a national campaign on ableism as well as access to information (subtitles) on the news. The next meeting in December will cover the remaining recommendations from the ‘Locked Out’ report.

From Meeting 5 - Disability Rights Taskforce

Date: 8 February 2023

A paper was shared with the taskforce ahead of the meeting called *Locked Out Report Recommendations Update - January 2023* and an update on using the paper was given in the meeting. The paper contains the following reference to sign language:

The Welsh Government does not have any regulatory control over what is broadcast by broadcasters on television, radio and its digital services with regards to accessibility. The Welsh Government meets regularly with broadcasters in Wales, including through our formal Memorandums of Understanding with S4C and the BBC to discuss broadcasting matters. These meetings, alongside meetings with Ofcom, provide the opportunity to stress the importance of ensuring content is accessible and delivered in line with the Ofcom Code on Television Access Services, which sets out the guidance and requirements for subtitling, sign language and audio description.

Working Group meetings

From Meeting 1 – Access to Services (including Communications and Technology) Working Group– Minutes

Date: 15 June 2022

During this meeting the following information was shared:

The All-Wales Deaf Mental Health and Well-being group are a group of Deaf and hearing professionals working together. They have written a report with the aim of starting a dialogue with Welsh Government to improve the mental health of Deaf people in Wales. The report 'Deaf People Wales: Hidden Inequality' can be found here:

- Full report: https://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Deaf-People-Wales_Hidden-Inequality-2021.pdf
- [Pobl Fyddar Cymru: Anghydraddoldeb Cudd - adroddiad llawn](#)
- Executive summary (English): https://iss-www-00.swansea.ac.uk/media/Executive-summary_Deaf-People-Wales_Hidden-Inequality_English.pdf
- Executive summary (Welsh): <https://iss-www-00.swansea.ac.uk/media/Exec-Summary-Deaf-People-Wales-Cymraeg.pdf>
- Executive summary (BSL): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34a1pPkqAzE>

From Meeting 2 - Access to Services Working Group (including Communications and Technology) Working Group - Minutes

Date: 17 October 2022

A document was shared with the group that drew out recommendations from the Locked-Out Report in relation to access to services including: 68. We urgently ask that broadcasters and Welsh Government ensure footage on the news and social media includes BSL and subtitles.

During this meeting, part of the discussion included the following:

3.3 The group also discussed a need for inclusion and representation in television and everyday society. The media should learn about the Social Model of Disability as people watching and listening could pick up on the new language being used by

reporters and presenters. This discussion continued into a requirement for British Sign Language (BSL) and subtitles. One member described the difficulty they face in trying to locate BSL and subtitles on certain television programmes. Sometimes, they are available, but you have to go onto another platform in order to access them.

3.4 The group agreed that some members of the public are often under the impression that every deaf person can speak for themselves – and a member stated this is quite stereotypical. [Chair] agreed that this is a key point. Other members proposed that any national campaign around these issues need to be mindful of the huge diversity amongst disabled people and one size does not fit all. Stereotypes need to be broken, not reinforced. A national campaign would also need to reach a wide variety of audiences and should use social media platforms, in order to reach younger people as they don't tend to watch television in the traditional sense. It is useful to note that some people may be disabled due to the pandemic – newly disabled people may not know where to turn and get their information from. Need to ensure a range of platforms are used and are accessible. Equitable access is important because everyone else has it.

[...]

- 3.7. Linking to an earlier point made – audio description would be great to have more of, but this is not considered as much. [Chair] asked what action needs to be taken to get these things to happen? Audio description is also a limited service on televised programmes. Not all programmes have it added to them – it's mainly newer programmes that do but historical programmes often don't. It is often the same in cinemas; small, independent companies struggle with the technology, but bigger cinema chains are not always reliable.
- 3.8. Subtitles tend to be on the news channels, but not necessarily BSL – News 24 will have an interpreter for an hour.

[...]

4.1. Recent work by the Older People's Commissioner (OPC) for Wales to ensure older people can access information and services in an increasingly digital world could be a possible model to explore. While the OPC focused on local authorities and health boards, there could be potential for a call on providers of public/private services on what they're doing to ensure full inclusion (with a definition outlined for them) – this would provide a baseline, but also need to be clear on the people this group is targeting as a lot of the discussion has been on e.g. cinemas. The OPC looked at this from a human rights point for access to information:

<https://olderpeople.wales/news/acessing-information-and-services/>

From Meeting 3 - Access to Services (including Communication and Technology) Working group– Breakout Room Exercise

Date: 06 December 2022

There was a breakout room exercise where members were asked to have a discussion based on Locked Out Report Recommendations:

Group 1

3. In the long term we call for a national public campaign to improve the public understanding of ableism in Welsh society.

68. We urgently ask that broadcasters and Welsh Government ensure footage on the news and social media includes BSL and subtitles.

The question for the breakout room to consider was: **What would a good national public campaign for understanding ableism look like?**

From Meeting 5 - Access to Services (including Communication and Technology) Working group – Minutes

Date: 07 March 2023

During this meeting, the following point was raised:

- One group member mentioned key stumbling blocks for deaf community is the number of qualified British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters available in Wales. There are 5 Deaf BSL translators in Wales. No funding or training in Wales – BSL needs to be on par with Welsh language.

Contribution from the chat:

- Demand for interpreters – increased need for hybrid events to become the norm has seen an increase in the demand for British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. Welsh Govt funding for events should be linked to the provision of hybrid events.

From Meeting 4 - Embedding and Understanding the Social Model of Disability - Minutes

Date: 12 October 2023

During a discussion on the role of regulation, the facilitator read aloud a few chat contributions relating to this discussion:

3.12.2 An example of co-production which can be done remotely: DAAS [Disability Awareness and Support Network] member has been working with Deaf people from across Wales to develop the Curriculum for Wales British Sign Language glossary (working exclusively in BSL).

From Meeting 1 - Children and Young People working group – Minutes

Date: 21 June 2023

During the discussion, the following point was raised:

1.10. There is a lack of British Sign Language in all services we need to ensure this is available for children and young people.

[...]

3.3 The following research documents were included in the chat for consideration:

- [Written Statement - British Deaf Association Audit](#)
- [Deaf People Wales Hidden Inequality 2021](#)
- [Deafblind UK](#) has updated research available online.
- [The World Federation of the Deafblind](#) has 2 important reports available online (2018 and 2022)
- New information Dr Paddy Ladd has published good practice in Education from Deaf professionals from all over the world.
- Dr Rob Wilks new research on education in Wales and Scotland for deaf people.

From Meeting 2 - Children and Young People working group – Minutes

Date: 27 September 2023

Following a presentation from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, (CAHMs) the following point was raised:

5.6. Perceived stigma around disability and mental health. Learning Disability and Mental Health services are ‘bolted together’. We need to learn how to pull these apart. This is exacerbated with limited services and lack of alternatives. In addition, a lack of reasonable adjustments (such as BSL interpretation) to make children and families comfortable receiving services from the therapists.

[...]

During any other business, the following was raised:

The group may also be interested in a couple of recent publications from the Commissioner’s office:

- [Ambitions for Wales survey findings](#) – there’s also accessible versions of the report to feedback to children including a BSL version, feedback story for children with PMLD, and children under the age of 7.

From Meeting 3 - Children and Young Persons Working Group – Minutes

Date: 25 October 2023

During the discussion, the following point was raised:

3.12. A representative from British Deaf Association highlighted the petition for support for children who are deaf and the lack of BSL teachers. School is not accessible to deaf learners e.g., examinations. This is not just about the United Nations Convention of Rights for Disabled People (UNCRDP), its about getting the best out of people.

In Breakout Rooms the group were asked: “After having heard discussions around health and education within these working groups to date, what do you feel are the key priorities / recommendations for children and young people?” The following point was raised:

- Inclusivity - some parents are having to pay for British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation/lessons.