



Scottish Council on Deafness

## Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 Requests (FoI)

### Involvement in Local Planning Processes

Policy & Research Officer

March 2008

## Research request

The Scottish Council on Deafness Social Inclusion Sub Committee requested that the Policy & Research Officer write to the Scottish Local Authorities to ask how many Deaf, Deafblind, and Deafened people are involved in their local planning processes.

## Scoping Exercise

On 14 January 2008, the Policy & Research Officer emailed a letter to all 32 Scottish Councils.

The letter asked for the following information, under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002:

1. Does your Council keep records of how many Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind and Deafened people ask for information on:
  - a. the Local Planning Process;
  - b. Community Planning?
  - c. If so, how many have asked for information?
2. Does your Council provide information about the Local Planning process and/or Community Planning in:
  - a. British Sign Language;
  - b. Plain English?
3. When organising Public meetings regarding your Council's Local Plan, what steps does the Council take to ensure Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind and Deafened people have access to these meetings?
4. In the last three years, how many:
  - a. Deaf Sign Language Sign Language users have been involved in your Council's Local Plan;
  - b. Deafblind people have been involved in your Council's Local Plan; and
  - c. Deafened people have been involved in your Council's Local Plan?

### Freedom of Information Request to Scottish Local Councils: Involvement in Local Planning Issues: Information Requests

Council	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	Comments
Aberdeen City	0	0	0	No record of anyone asking for information
Aberdeenshire				Information not recorded
Angus				Information not recorded
Argyll & Bute				Information not recorded
Clackmannanshire				Information not recorded
Dumfries & Galloway	0	0	0	No requests received
Dundee				Information not recorded
East Ayrshire				Information not recorded
East Dunbartonshire				Council does not ask for this information when people contact the Council.
East Lothian				Information not recorded
East Renfrewshire	0	0	0	No requests received
Edinburgh City				Information not recorded
Falkirk				Information not recorded
Fife				Information not recorded
Glasgow City				The Council has consulted on two City Plans using an online questionnaire and circulating paper copies. The questionnaire asked, as part of the monitoring process, if the respondents had any disability (this was not defined or broken down into types of disability). No respondents filled in this information. Therefore the Council have no record of people asking for information.
Highland				Information not recorded
Inverclyde	None	None	None	
Midlothian				Information not recorded
Moray	0	0	0	
North Ayrshire				The Council do not record this information, but state that they have never received such a request.
North Lanarkshire				Information not recorded
Orkney Islands				Information not recorded
Perth and Kinross				Information not recorded
Renfrewshire				<b>Did not reply to request</b>

## Involvement in Local Planning Processes

Council	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	Comments
Scottish Borders				<b>Did not reply to request</b>
Shetland Islands				Information not recorded
South Ayrshire				Information not recorded
South Lanarkshire				Reviewing monitoring policy and processes
Stirling				Information not recorded
West Dunbartonshire				Information not recorded
West Lothian				Information not recorded
Western Isles				<b>Did not reply to request</b>

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**Information Produced in accessible formats**

Council	BSL	Plain English	Comments
Aberdeen City	No (a)	No (b)	(a) Does not provide information in BSL as "a matter of course". (b) the Council is committed to providing information in Plain English "although this has yet to be implemented insofar as the local plan is concerned."
Aberdeenshire	No	No (c)	(c) "Requires officers to have a regard to a policy on communicating clearly."
Angus	On request	Yes	
Argyll & Bute	(e)	(f)	(e) Did not answer the question. (f) All information is written in "a simple language as possible. I (respondent) note that the contents of both of these sites are speech enabled using "browsealoud" software."We do not as a matter of course produce Braille or large print documents, but do have facilities to do this via external agencies if requested in advance. As far as I have been able to ascertain, while we have (on very rare occasions) been asked to translate documentation, we have never been asked for Braille, or large print versions of this document. This may however partly be because our web versions can be magnified.
Clackmannanshire	On request	On request	
Dumfries & Galloway	(g)	Yes (h)	(g) "The Planning and Environment Service has a member of staff trained to provide British Sign Language on request." (h) "Planning Staff in the Local Plan section have undertaken a plain English course to assist with this requirement."
Dundee	No	No	
East Ayrshire	No (i)	(j)	(i) "However, information on Community Planning is available on CD and tape in local offices and libraries, and comprehensive information is available in the Community Planning website at <a href="http://www.eastayrshirecommunityplan.org">www.eastayrshirecommunityplan.org</a> ." (j) "Not sure what you mean by this. We do not have a 'kite-mark' for plain English."
East Dunbartonshire	On request (k)	Yes	(k) The Council has had one request for a BSL translation in the past two years and this was arranged. Information is not produced in BSL as standard.
East Lothian	On request	(l)	(l) Currently under review
East Renfrewshire	On request	Yes	
Edinburgh City	(m)	(n)	(m) "Public documents are published in compliance with the Council's accessibility guidelines. A standard information panel is printed on the rear of public documents, advising on sources of further assistance with translation and other communication formats provided the 'Interpretation and Translation Service'. (n) "The most recent Local Plan document was written to avoid as much jargon as possible."
Falkirk	(o)	(o)	(o) "Braille, large type and audio tape versions of strategic documents, plans are offered on covers. Not sure what BSL is? No, we haven't been offering this BSL facility explicitly on documents or at meetings. This is an issue for our equal opps officer and I will bring her attention to this."
Fife	(p)	On request	(p) If a person would like more information, then a member of staff will arrange to meet with him/her and arrange to have an interpreter present. "Also, the 'Fifedirect' website at <a href="http://www.fifedirect.org.uk">www.fifedirect.org.uk</a> advises our customers that "If you, or someone you know, would like information from Fife Council in a language other than English, or in an alternative format such as large print, Braille etc please call 08451 555500. As well as arranging to provide documents in other languages, there is a real-time interpreting service available on this number to answer questions from speakers of other languages, or deaf customers."

## Involvement in Local Planning Processes

Council	BSL	Plain English	Comments
Glasgow City	On request	Yes	
Highland	No	(q)	(q) Local Plans will be written in Plain English in the near future
Inverclyde	On request	Yes	
Midlothian	On request	Yes	
Moray	On request	On request	
North Ayrshire	No	No	
North Lanarkshire	On request	Yes	
Orkney Islands	No(r)	Yes	(r) "the information is in writing and on the Council's website."
Perth and Kinross	No	Yes	
Renfrewshire			<b>Did not reply to request</b>
Scottish Borders			<b>Did not reply to request</b>
Shetland Islands	On request	Yes	
South Ayrshire	No	No	
South Lanarkshire	On request	Yes	"It should be noted that the Council makes extensive use of its Website to publicise consultation documents and events. An on-line consultation system was put in place. It is hoped that these arrangements make it easier for Deaf people to access these documents."
Stirling	No	No	
West Dunbartonshire	No	Yes	The Council attempts to use Plain English. The Community Plan is drafted "with Plain English in mind and is offered in a variety of formats including large print and electronically and a summary version."
West Lothian	On request	Yes	
Western Isles			<b>Did not reply to request</b>

**Steps taken to ensure people have access to meetings/events**

Council	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	Comments
Aberdeen City				"At the commencement of the local plan preparation process the Council invited consultation from a wide range of organisations, including the following: The Local Community Special Needs Group; the Grampian Society for the Blind; the Health & Social Care Forum; and the Special Needs Forum. However in the absence of a response, further contact was not pursued."
Aberdeenshire	On request	On request	On request	
Angus	On request	On request	On request	No specific requests for communication support requested
Argyll & Bute			Loop system	"We have induction loop equipment installed in three of our main locations (i.e. wherever we have a P.A. system) We also have five portable induction loop systems which are available for meetings if requested prior to the meeting. These can be used by any service, but currently no specific log is kept of where or how they are used, only which service currently has them. In note that when this council is made aware that people with either a sensory or physical impairment are to be within the building for a meeting, then appropriate H&S measures are put in place i.e. if appropriate they will be informed of the existence and location of 'evac' chairs, the location of alarm lights will be highlighted and appropriately trained staff will be notified of the individuals presence and the approximate time of arrival and departure time from the building.
Clackmannanshire			Loop system	Loop system is available in Council Chambers.
Dumfries & Galloway			Loop system	
Dundee	On request	On request	On request	"In the preparation of the previous Local Plan the Council wrote out to all the local representative bodies making them aware of the process and seeking feedback on any requirements for participation."
East Ayrshire	On request	On request	On request	
East Dunbartonshire	On request	On request	On request	The Council issues invitations to Community Assembly events to Dunbartonshire Deaf Children's Association and Deafblind Scotland. The Council offers extra assistance – hearing loops and if required, BSL/English interpreters.
East Lothian				Under review at this time
East Renfrewshire	On request	On request	Loop system	
Edinburgh City	On request	On request	Loop system	Have been asked to provide BSL/English interpreter in the past.
Falkirk	No	No	No	"Public mtgs (sic) have been organised without offering these services."
Fife				Did not answer the question
Glasgow City	On request	On request	On request	

## Involvement in Local Planning Processes

Council	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	Comments
Highland	On request	On request	On request	
Inverclyde	On request	On request	Loop system	
Midlothian			Loop system	"The Local Plan Inquiry conducted over six months in 2007 took place in the Scottish Mining Museum. The Council offered to fund the provision of an induction loop at these premises to make the venue accessible to those with hearing impairment. A loudspeaker system was also installed."
Moray	On request	On request	On request	
North Ayrshire				No meetings held recently
North Lanarkshire	On request	On request	Loop system	
Orkney Islands	On request	On request	On request	No requests have ever been made
Perth and Kinross	On request	On request	On request	No requests have ever been made
Renfrewshire				<b>Did not reply to request</b>
Scottish Borders				<b>Did not reply to request</b>
Shetland Islands	No	No	No	"Announcements regarding meetings are given on local radio and in print in the local newspaper. The meeting venues all have disabled access, but we do not set up a hearing loop."
South Ayrshire	No	No	No	No specific provision made
South Lanarkshire	Yes	On request	On request	The Council provided BSL/English interpreters at their last community planning meeting as requested for two participants. The Council contacts the South Lanarkshire Deaf Forum whenever a consultation event is being organised and will arrange appropriate communication support for the events, including for workshops. If necessary, the Council will also pay travel expenses.
Stirling	No	No	No	When organising Public Meetings regarding our Local Plan, Stirling Council have to date not specifically taken any steps to ensure Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind and Deafened people have access to these meetings."
West Dunbartonshire			Loop system	
West Lothian	On request	On request	On request	
Western Isles				<b>Did not reply to request</b>

**Numbers involved in Council's Local Plan**

Council	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	Comments
Aberdeen City				Did not answer the question
Aberdeenshire				Information not held
Angus				Information not held
Argyll & Bute				Information not held
Clackmannanshire				Information not held
Dumfries & Galloway				Information not held
Dundee				Information not held
East Ayrshire				Information not held
East Dunbartonshire				Information not held
East Lothian				"We are not aware of any such people being involved."
East Renfrewshire				As far as the Council is aware, there has been no direct involvement with the Local Plan by Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind or Deafened people. This may be due to the fact that consultation happens anonymously through the Council website.
Edinburgh City				Information not held
Falkirk				Did not answer the question
Fife				Did not answer the question
Glasgow City				Did not answer the question
Highland				Information not held
Inverclyde				Information not held
Midlothian	0	0	1	
Moray				Information not held
North Ayrshire				Information not held
North Lanarkshire				Information not held
Orkney Islands				Information not held
Perth and Kinross				Information not held
Renfrewshire				<b>Did not reply to request</b>
Scottish Borders				<b>Did not reply to request</b>
Shetland Islands				Information not held

## Involvement in Local Planning Processes

Council	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	Comments
South Ayrshire				Information not held
South Lanarkshire				Information not held
Stirling				Information not held
West Dunbartonshire				Information not held
West Lothian				Information not held
Western Isles				<b>Did not reply to request</b>

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**Freedom of Information Request to Scottish Local Councils: Involvement in Community Planning Issues**

Council	Information Requests			Numbers involved			Comments
	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	
Aberdeen City	0	0	0	1	0	Number unknown	No requests received
Inverclyde	0	0	0	Number unknown	Number unknown	Number unknown	No requests received
North Ayrshire	0	0	0	No answer	No answer	No answer	

Council	Accessible formats		Steps taken			Comments
	BSL	Plain English	Deaf	Deafblind	Deafened	
Aberdeen City	On request	*	Interpreter booked	None	Loop system provided	*the Council is committed to providing information in Plain English "although this has yet to be implemented insofar as the local plan is concerned."
Inverclyde	On request	Yes	On request	On request	On request	"We engage with Inverclyde Community Care Forum and Inverclyde Council on Disability to invite communities to events, and they are able to help to support any Deaf Sign Language Users, Deafblind and Deafened people."
North Ayrshire	On request #	#	No answer	No answer	No answer	#The Council's website has information on community planning and the Council states that it is accessible to anyone who needs this information. BSL/English interpreters are available on demand and have been provided at a few events. Documents are published with advice from the Corporate Communications Department.
Stirling	On request	On request				

**Additional comments made in the replies received**

Council	Further Comments
Clackmannanshire	"Perhaps we can do more for anyone with hearing or sight difficulties and I would be pleased to be advised further if you consider it appropriate."
Edinburgh City	The FOI Officer also sent a copy of the Equalities Impact Assessment of the Edinburgh City Local Plan and asked for comments on how to improve communications with Deaf, Deafblind and Deafened people.
Falkirk	Least formal reply received.
Glasgow City	The process has been publicised in the Glasgow magazine; the e-newsletter of the Equality Network Forum; and in the "glossy Equalities Bulletin" that is circulated to equalities groups in the city. Q4 – "We have added the Scottish Council on Deafness to the City Plan consultee database for future reference."
Midlothian	The Council has a policy– "Communicating - Loud and Clear" that sets out the Council's commitment to equal access to services and information. "The policy is to ensure that prominence is given to the availability, on request, of all public Council documents, reports, publications, etc in other languages, Braille, audio tape or other formats suitable to the customer, subject to resources. The policy guidance has specific instructions to staff for assisting people with a range of hearing impairments, for example, arranging for a BSL or lip speaker, the use and availability of audio aids like induction loops, minicom services, etc."
North Lanarkshire	A copy of the Plain English Guide was included with the reply. The Service Department asked the FOI Officer to note in the reply that "the formal statutory process for the new North Lanarkshire Local Plan, which is about to start, will provide the opportunity to build on the equalities theme of the Council's new service planning process. As part of the formal statutory local plan process, the Council will be monitoring the profile of all participants in the interest of ensuring fairness across potentially disadvantaged groups. The monitoring process, while an improvement in itself, will also lead to the complementary development of records such as those currently sought."
South Ayrshire	"In respect of Community Planning, all the public documents that we issue specifically offer to provide Braille versions on request. To date we have never received a request for a Braille version of any community planning document. As such our records show no Deaf Sign Language, Deafblind or Deafened people asking Community Planning information. In our continued dialogue with the local Disability Forum, the issue of provision for deaf people has not been raised as a problem requiring specific and immediate attention by the Partnership. As regards the use of Plain English, documents, like the South Ayrshire Community Plan 2006-2010, are required to adhere to the standards set down by the Plain English Society and the Community Plan was rigorously vetted in this regard."
South Lanarkshire	"We would welcome any guidance the Scottish Council on Deafness can give, on how to make our services more accessible to the people affected by the different categories of deafness described in your letter."
West Dunbartonshire	West Dunbartonshire Council also provided details of the Joint Planning process for health, social work and housing, although I did not request this information in the FOI letters.
West Lothian	Included a copy of the Council's Equality Scheme with response

## Analysis of Results

Three Councils did not reply to the request:

- Renfrewshire;
- Scottish Borders; and
- Western Isles.

29 Councils did reply.

### Information Requests –

The Councils were asked if they keep records of how many Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind and Deafened people ask for information on the Local Planning Process and/or Community Planning; and if records are kept, how many people asked for information.

- 22 Councils do not record this information.
- Glasgow City Council has carried out two consultations on the City Plan. Both have been carried out online. The online questionnaire does ask if the person has a disability but not what type of disability. To date no one has given this information.
- South Lanarkshire Council is in the process of reviewing their monitoring processes.
- Five councils do ask for this information when a person contacts their offices, but according to their records no Deaf, Deafblind or Deafened person has declared themselves to the council.

### Information produced in accessible formats –

The Councils were asked if they provide information about the Local Planning process and/or Community Planning in BSL and Plain English.

#### **BSL:**

- 13 Councils provide information on request.
- 11 Councils do not provide information in BSL at all.
- Argyll & Bute Council did not answer the question.
- Dumfries & Galloway has a member of staff trained to provide British Sign Language on request.
- Fife Council will arrange for the person to go to the office to meet with someone from the Planning Executive and provide a BSL/English Interpreter.
- Edinburgh City Council produces information in compliance with the Council's accessibility guidance.
- The Freedom of Information Officer for Falkirk Council did not know what BSL is. Once it was explained, the answer to the question was that the Council does not offer this facility (BSL) for documents or at meetings.

#### **Plain English:**

- 14 Councils provide information as standard.
- Three Councils provide information on request.
- Six Councils do not provide information in Plain English.
- Argyll & Bute Council provide information in as simple a language as possible.
- East Ayrshire Council was unsure what was meant by Plain English.
- East Lothian Council is reviewing how information is produced.
- Edinburgh City Council advises staff to avoid using jargon.
- Falkirk Council did not answer the question.
- Highland Council is going to produce information in Plain English in the "near future".

### **Steps taken to ensure people have access to meetings/events –**

The Councils were asked what steps do they take to ensure Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind and Deafened people have access to public meetings regarding their Local Plan.

#### **Deaf People:**

- 15 Councils will arrange BSL/English Interpreters on request.
- One Council books BSL/English Interpreters for public meetings as standard.
- Four Councils do not consider the needs of Deaf people when organising public meetings.
- Five Councils did not answer the question.
- Aberdeen City Council contacted a number of disability organisations, none of which responded, so no further contact was considered.
- Argyll & Bute Council consider the health and safety implications for Deaf people, but not their communication support needs.
- East Lothian Council is currently reviewing all its procedures.
- North Ayrshire Council have not organised any meetings in recent times, so have nothing to report.

#### **Deafblind People**

- 16 Councils will arrange support on request.
- Four Councils do not consider the needs of Deafblind people when organising public meetings.
- Eight Councils did not answer the question.
- East Lothian Council is currently reviewing all its procedures.
- North Ayrshire Council have not organised any meetings in recent times, so have nothing to report.

#### **Deafened People**

- 12 Councils provide support on request.
- Nine Councils provide a loop system at all public meetings but nothing else.

## Involvement in Local Planning Processes

- Four Councils do not consider the needs of Deafened people when organising public meetings.
- Two Councils did not answer the question.
- East Lothian Council is currently reviewing all its procedures.
- North Ayrshire Council have not organised any meetings in recent times, so have nothing to report.

### **Numbers involved in Council's Local Plan -**

The Councils were asked to provide the number of Deaf, Deafblind and Deafened people who have been involved in the Local Plans in the last three years.

- 22 Councils do not record this information.
- Four Councils did not answer the question
- Midlothian Council has no record of any Deaf or Deafblind people being involved. They do report that 1 Deafened person was noted as being involved.
- East Lothian Council “are not aware of any such people being involved.”
- East Renfrewshire states that “there has been no direct involvement with the Local Plan by Deaf Sign Language users. This may be due to the fact that consultation happens anonymously through the Council website”.

### **Involvement in Community Planning Issues –**

Four Councils gave information specifically about their Community Planning in answer to the questions asked. These Councils are:

- Aberdeen City Council has not received any requests for information about community planning. The Council does have a record of one Deaf person being involved in meetings about Community Planning, as a BSL/English Interpreter has been booked for each meeting and a number of Deafened people have been involved. The Council will provide information in BSL if this is requested, and has made a commitment to providing all information on Community Planning in Plain English but has yet to implement this.

## Involvement in Local Planning Processes

- Inverclyde Council stated that they “engage with Inverclyde Community Care Forum and Inverclyde Council on Disability to invite communities to events, and they are able to help to support any Deaf Sign Language Users, Deafblind and Deafened people” in the Community Planning process.
- North Ayrshire Council supplied the following answer “The Council’s website has information on community planning and the Council states that it is accessible to anyone who needs this information. BSL/English interpreters are available on demand and have been provided at a few events. Documents are published with advice from the Corporate Communications Department.”
- Stirling Council will provide information in BSL and in Plain English on request.

### **Additional comments included in the replies received –**

Three Councils – Clackmannanshire, Edinburgh City and South Lanarkshire – asked if SCoD could provide information on how to make the planning process more accessible to Deaf, Deafblind and Deafened people.