

S4W-00627 Mark Griffin: To ask the Scottish Executive how many children use British Sign Language in school.

S4W-00628 Mark Griffin: To ask the Scottish Executive how many children use only British Sign Language in school.

Michael Russell: The information requested is not held centrally.

S4W-00629 Mark Griffin: To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has for legal recognition of British Sign Language as an official language of Scotland.

S4W-00630 Mark Griffin: To ask the Scottish Executive what documents and publications it makes available in British Sign Language.

S4W-00631 Mark Griffin: To ask the Scottish Executive how many requests it has received to translate its documents or publications into British Sign Language in the last five years.

S4W-00632 Mark Griffin: To ask the Scottish Executive how many requests to translate its documents or publications into British Sign Language have been granted in the last five years.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/businessBulletin/bb-11/bb-06-09e.htm>

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to promote and develop a national qualification in British Sign Language in the Curriculum for Excellence. (S4W-641)

Michael Russell: The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) currently has a suite of stand alone National Qualifications Units in learning British Sign Language at Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework level 3 (Access 3), 4 (Intermediate 4), 5 (Intermediate 2) and 6 (Higher). These will continue to be available under Curriculum for Excellence. SQA is currently validating a professional development award which is designed to develop skills in British Sign Language as well as knowledge and skill in the Linguistics of British Sign Language, Scottish Deaf History: 1750 to the Present and the Community and Culture of Deaf People. The award should be available to centres in August 2011.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the Scottish Qualifications Authority regarding national qualifications in British Sign Language. (S4W-642)

Michael Russell: The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) currently has a suite of stand alone National Qualifications Units in learning British Sign Language at Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework level 3 (Access 3), 4 (Intermediate 1), 5 (Intermediate 2) and 6 (Higher). The Scottish Government continues to maintain dialogue with the SQA across the range of national courses.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the Scottish Funding Council regarding the funding of higher and further education courses in British Sign Language. (S4W-643)

Michael Russell: We have had no such discussions with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) over this provision. However, SFC has been, and continues to be, in discussions with Heriot Watt University over the possible introduction of a degree in sign language interpretation as an extension of its applied languages provision. The SFC will be considering a proposal from them in the near future.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many of its staff are able to communicate in British Sign Language. (S4W-636)

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many of its staff hold qualifications in British Sign Language. (S4W-637)

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what level of qualification in British Sign Language has been attained by each of its employees conversant in the language. (S4W-638)

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many of its frontline employees are able to communicate in British Sign Language. (S4W-639)

Michael Matheson: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-635 on 20 June 2011 (see below). All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/Default.aspx>.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many of its staff are British Sign Language users. (S4W-00635)

Michael Matheson: As with other languages, the information relating to staff language or other qualifications, is not held centrally, nor do we hold centrally the information relating to any languages understood or spoken by staff.

Where a member of the public or job applicant required access to British Sign Language interpreter, as a reasonable adjustment to access a service, we would arrange for that to be provided in the same manner as we would for any other reasonable adjustment or interpretation requirement.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Executive what national evaluation it has made of psychological therapy services. (S4W-418)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government sets national direction of policy on mental health and provides funding to agencies, including NHS boards and local authorities, to support implementation of policy. The management of local actions in implementing and evaluating national policy are the responsibility of relevant local agencies.

Officials together with colleagues from the Mental Health Collaborative, ISD and NES have met with each NHS board to discuss progress in developing workforce capacity, referral pathways and information systems to ensure delivery of the Psychological Therapies HEAT target.

In addition we published *Applied Psychologists and Psychology in NHS Scotland* in March 2011 which has identified the key challenges and opportunities in the provision of psychology services, and the role of psychologists in supporting staff from all disciplines to increase the capacity to deliver psychological therapies in the future.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary agree with Pam Duncan, of Inclusion Scotland, that the cost of the council tax freeze in 2009-10 was £310 million but the new charges for care services for some of the most vulnerable people brought in £350 million? Does the cabinet secretary think that that is fair to our older and disabled people?

Nicola Sturgeon: There is a serious point here, but before I address it I must say that I am not sure whether we are hearing yet another Labour position on the council tax, after Labour went from opposing it to supporting it but offering only an additional £10 million over the Government funding. I am not quite sure whether this is an early leadership stake by Jackie Baillie, to say that Labour is actually against the council tax freeze.

Jackie Baillie knows that the Government has fully funded the council tax freeze. That ensures that council tax payers do not face the burden of higher bills, which is extremely important in these tight financial times, and that councils are not robbed of the resources that enable them to continue to provide services for the people who rely on them. In these tight financial times, we will continue to ensure that the NHS and local government budgets get the attention that they deserve, and we encourage all our statutory agencies to ensure, in the interests of fairness and equality, that people with disabilities are treated fairly.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/apps2/business/orsearch/ReportView.aspx?r=6273&mode=html>

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to ensure that local authorities comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the disability equality duty when reducing services for disabled people. (S4W-287)

Nicola Sturgeon: Local authorities are subject to the Equality Act 2010 and the new public sector equality duty which it contains. This new duty came into force on 5 April 2011 and covers all of the relevant protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. The duty requires public authorities to pay "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment which are unlawful under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations. It is for local authorities themselves to determine how they respond to the duty.