

Scottish Council on Deafness Scottish Parliamentary Elections 2016 Manifesto



Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD)

Enabling Deaf Citizenship

The Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) is the lead organisation for deaf issues in Scotland, representing organisations working with and on behalf of deaf people: Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing people. SCoD's membership provides an effective working partnership between the Third, Public and Private Sectors (the Deaf Sector) and the Scottish Government.

We see a society where deaf people have equal access, rights and citizenship with their hearing peers.

In order to be active citizens in Scotland, there is still a way to go before deaf people have equality of access: this may be access to goods, services and information in their own language and in a manner that they fully understand; or deaf children have the right to a bilingual education which will enable them to become active adult citizens of the future.

SCoD calls on the political parties supporting candidates in the May elections to take on board the **following “asks”** if they are **elected to government**.

Our main ask is that the government supports and puts in **place an Inclusive Communication Strategy** as part of their **disability plan** but also across government, its departments and divisions, so that everyone with a **language/communication support need** at any time in their lives from **cradle to grave** will receive the support they need when they need it. This **commitment to inclusive communication** will lead to a **more inclusive society, more active citizens and a Scotland that shows it really cares for all its citizens** no matter the circumstances they find themselves in.



As part of the Inclusive Communication agenda, we would also like the government to **continue the work** started on the **British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015**. The representatives for the **British Sign Language (BSL) National Advisory Group (NAG)** have been recruited and work will start soon on the first BSL National Plan. It is **important** that this **first plan** shows what the **Scottish Government** and national **Public Bodies** are going to do to **promote the use and understanding of BSL across Scotland**.

SCoD would like to see these areas involved in the **National Plan**:

- **More training** for parents and families of Deaf children **to access “Family Sign”**, which is available from NDCS.
- **Free BSL classes** that are age appropriate for families who have a deaf baby/toddler/child/young person.
- **BSL used in pre-school education in all 32 local authority areas in Scotland** to start the bilingual development of all children. This means that deaf children go through the school with hearing children who can **communicate easily with them in BSL**.
- **BSL a fully accredited subject** that can be taught in primary and secondary schools as a “1+2” subject for all children. Priority should first be given to the **hearing parents of the deaf child**.

People who are Hard of Hearing or Deafened

Scotland’s people who are **Hard of Hearing** or are **Deafened** need increased access too. The **areas** that we would like the Scottish Government **to consider** are:

- **A continued investment** in the “See Hear Strategy” to ensure that the recommendations in the strategy are **long term ongoing goals** that will **make a difference to all ages** of people who have a hearing loss, a sight loss or both.
- **New and refurbished schools** that are **acoustically accessible** throughout the **whole of the school campus**. Children and young people **who have little hearing** need to be in rooms and spaces that have **good acoustics** so that they can **acquire language more easily** and be able to hear more.
- **A commitment** to ensuring that **all internal places** where members of the public and/or employees have access to will **have working hearing loops** and **staff who know how to test and use them**.
- **Internal training** for all staff so that **all departments of the Scottish Government** change their thinking from using the medical model of disability to the **social model of disability**. This is so that in the **design of policy**, the Scottish Government can lead the way across the UK in **dismantling the barriers** that deaf people face on a daily basis and increase their access to all aspects of life in Scotland.

•Further **support and investment** for the **Lip Reading Strategy** so that the **development of resources** to help people take responsibility for the next steps in their hearing loss management continue to be available in the long term. These resources are **critical** given the **long term nature of hearing loss** and will help people meet and overcome challenges.

•Continued **support** for the **training of lip reading tutors** who are able to **help people with acquired deafness** avoid the **isolation** this disability brings. This training will become **essential** as the Scottish population continues to include an **increasing number of older people** who are losing their hearing as they age.

•For many people, **tinnitus** can be a far more **troublesome symptom than any hearing loss** they have. Tinnitus is not a disease or an illness, it is a symptom generated within a **person's own auditory pathways**. The precise cause of tinnitus is still not fully understood. SCoD asks that more is done to **support research into the causes of tinnitus** and that **more data is gathered on who has tinnitus** in Scotland. A further ask is that information and support is widely available for those who have tinnitus or who are caring for someone who has it.



Finally, SCoD has **two** more general asks:

1. That the Scottish Government work with deaf people, universities, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and others to develop **routes to appropriate qualifications** for
 - a. Teachers of the Deaf;
 - b. BSL Tutors; and
 - c. BSL/English Interpreters.

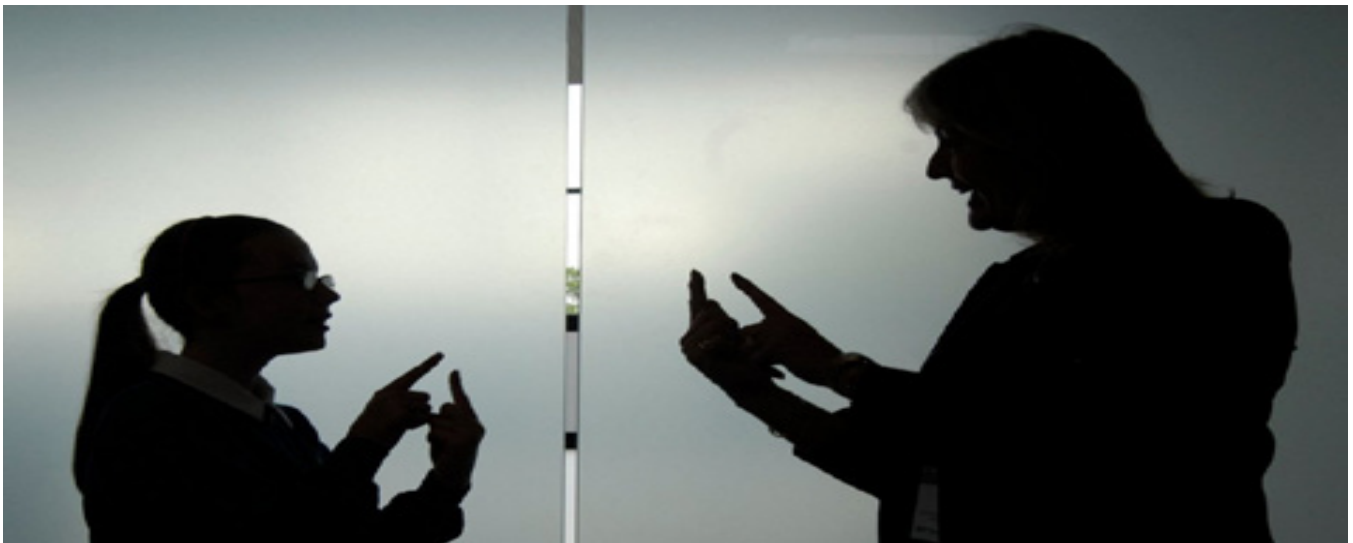
SCoD would also like to see a **commitment to personal and professional development** build in to the processes so that more people, deaf and hearing, want to be involved.

2. That the Scottish Government **sets the standard** in language/communication support provision **by providing a national fund** that organisations can access to ensure deaf people (and others with a communication support need) can be **fully active citizens**. For example, deaf people would like the same access to volunteering that their hearing peers have, but too often, the organisation has no money in their budget for language/communication support so cannot provide the same opportunity.

At a **local level**, local authorities could also be encouraged to **have a “pot”** for organisations to **access for language/communication support** so that deaf people can join Community Councils, Access Panels, and be involved in **local volunteering opportunities**.

Volunteering can be a means of **accessing the skills required** for paid work and deaf people are, at the moment, being denied this opportunity simply because there is **no money set aside** for language/communication support.

SCoD and its membership in the Deaf Sector, see a society where deaf people have equal access, rights and citizenship with their hearing peers. We are sure that you agree with this and will do whatever you can to make sure it happens.



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