



Scottish Council  
on Deafness (SCoD)

# Scottish Council on Deafness

## Scottish Council Elections

### 2017 Manifesto

## 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<sup>1</sup>. 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. We support our members to take person-centred, rights –based approach to their work as deafness is a hidden disability and we should all be trying to reduce the barriers that deaf people face on a daily basis in the hearing world.<sup>2</sup>

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; and 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 local government.

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<sup>1</sup> The four pillars of deafness. We use this to describe the different barriers that deaf people have on a daily basis depending on the level of their deafness. <http://www.scod.org.uk/information/position-statements/definitions-of-deafness/>

<sup>2</sup> Social model of disability - [http://www.disabilitywales.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Social\\_Model\\_of\\_Disability.pdf](http://www.disabilitywales.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Social_Model_of_Disability.pdf)

Our main ask is that local government supports and puts in place an Inclusive Communication Strategy as part of their equality plans, making this a visible mainstreamed approach to inclusive communication, both corporately and within Councils nationally; and also across each council, its departments and divisions, so that everyone with a language/communication support need<sup>3</sup> 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.

## **BSL users**

As part of the Inclusive Communication agenda, we would also like local government to work with people whose first or preferred language is BSL and their representatives when drafting their BSL Local Plans. It is important that these plans show what Local Authorities are going to do to promote the use and understanding of BSL across Scotland; and how the BSL Local Plans 'fit' with the BSL National Plan which is being consulted on by the Scottish Government.

**SCoD** would like to see these areas included in the **BSL Local Plans**, which in turn will be joined up with Equality and Diversity and See Hear plans:

More **training** for parents and families of deaf children **to access "Family Sign"**, which is available from a number of deaf organisations<sup>4</sup>.

**Free BSL classes** that are age appropriate for families who have a deaf baby/toddler/child/young person and provided as a priority to these families.

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<sup>3</sup> A person who has a language/communication support need could be someone who has a Learning Disability or a Learning Difficulty, who has had a stroke, who has had a brain injury, or someone whose first language is a community language and who has through illness or injury has developed a language/communication support need in their first language, having lost any English they have had or not having had the chance to learn English/BSL.

<sup>4</sup> SCoD can provide contact details.

**BSL used in pre-school education in all 32 local authority areas in Scotland** to start the bilingual development of all children. BSL is a fully accredited subject that can be taught in primary and secondary schools as a '1+2' subject for all children. This means that deaf children go through the school with hearing children who can **communicate easily with them in BSL**.

The BSL Local Plans follow **the lead taken** by the BSL National Plan so that there is a **joined-up approach** to the **promotion and understanding of BSL** across Scotland.

## **People who are Hard of Hearing or Deafened**

SCoD uses the four pillars of deafness to describe levels of hearing loss as people have different needs.

Scotland's people who are **Hard of Hearing** or are **Deafened** need increased access too. The **areas** that we would like Local Authorities to **consider** are:

An **increased 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.

More and more school campuses are also **community spaces** in the evenings, at weekends and in the school holidays. It is important that schools are **fully accessible** not only for deaf pupils, but also for members of the community who are Deaf, Deafblind, Deafened or Hard of Hearing.

**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**. The local authority will promote and support a deaf awareness campaign and will ensure that it leads by example by cutting down on background noise, including music, and making sure that lighting is suitable for **people who lipread**.

**Internal training on Inclusive Communication** for all staff so that **all services of each Council** change their thinking from using the medical model of disability to the **social model of disability** and have a good understanding of what Inclusive Communication means in practice. This is so that in the **design of policy and process**, the Scottish Local Authorities can support the Scottish Government to lead the way across the UK in **preventing and removing 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** at a local level **continue to be available in the long term** to help people take responsibility for the next steps in their hearing loss management. These resources are **critical** given the **long term nature of hearing loss** and will help people meet and overcome challenges.

SCoD would like to see the Lip Reading Strategy, BSL Local Plans, need for good quality language/communication support to be provided across all services, including end of life/palliative care to be included as part of the **integration of health and social care**.

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 **information and support is widely available** for those who have tinnitus or who are caring for someone who has it.

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

1. That the Local Authorities work with the Scottish Government, which in turn will work with deaf people, universities, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and others to develop **routes to appropriate qualifications** for professionals working with deaf people from “cradle to grave”  
SCoD would also like to see a greater **commitment to personal and professional development** built into the processes so that more people, deaf and hearing, want to be train and be involved in these professions.
2. That local authorities could be encouraged to **have a “funding pot”** for organisations to **access for language/communication support** so that deaf people (and others with a language/communication support need) can be **fully active citizens** and can join Community Councils, Access Panels, and be involved in **local volunteering opportunities**.

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.

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.

3. When going through any **procurement process** for goods, information and services, there should be a clause built into contracts that ensures that the principles of inclusive communication apply to all service contacts and service level agreements; budgets are set to include language/communication support; and deaf people (and others with a language/communication support need) are included in the procurement team.

**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.**

## **Contact**

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