

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

Ymchwiliad: Bil Iaith Arwyddion Prydain (Cymru)

Ymateb gan: Cymwysterau Cymru

Welsh Parliament

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Inquiry: British Sign Language (Wales) Bill

Evidence from: Qualifactions Wales





Equality and Social Justice Committee

Via email: [REDACTED]

18 August 2025

Consultation on British Sign Language (Wales) Bill

Dear Committee Members,

As the independent regulator of non-degree qualifications in Wales, Qualifications Wales has responsibility for ensuring that qualifications and the Welsh qualifications system meet learners' reasonable needs.

Given our remit, Qualifications Wales welcomes the broad principles and provisions of the Bill and the duty on Welsh Ministers to promote and facilitate the use of BSL. We are of the view that this has the potential to contribute towards raising awareness of and the profile of BSL across Wales.

Qualifications in BSL

Our main role in relation to BSL is in facilitating a range of BSL qualifications at an appropriate level and size. In the last twelve months we have actively taken steps to establish a suitable range of BSL qualifications to recognise and certify learners attainment in BSL.

For example, we have recently extended the designation of BSL qualifications from Signature (an awarding body that specialises in BSL). This means that Signature's BSL qualifications can continue to be made available to schools and colleges across Wales. We know that these qualifications, particularly at Level 1 are important in providing the foundations of BSL for individuals who are beginning to learn the language.

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Additionally, from September 2027 as part of our Skills for Life units we are introducing small ten to twenty hour BSL units. These units will span a range of levels from Entry Level 1 to Level 2. These flexible units can be taken either as standalone units or contribute towards a larger skills qualification. Given their size they should be manageable for schools to deliver, particularly those schools who have little or no experience of delivering BSL qualifications currently. As these units form part of the National 14-16 qualifications offer they will also be available in Cymraeg as well as English.

We have also committed to permitting the designation of any 9-1 GCSE in BSL developed for learners in England, if and when such a qualification becomes available. This means that learners in Wales would be able to access it.

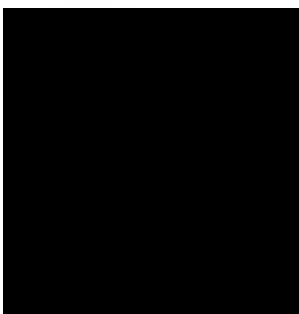
A made-for-Wales BSL GCSE

As outlined in the explanatory memorandum to the BSL Bill you will be aware that in October 2024 we announced our decision to suspend the development of a made-for-Wales BSL GCSE.¹ This was due to a number of factors, the most significant being the lack of teachers who have both qualified teacher status and the BSL expertise to effectively deliver the qualification in schools and the likely low uptake of a full GCSE. We are continuing to work with key stakeholders including the National Deaf Children's Society and Signature to explore the challenges around BSL GCSE in more detail and how these might be overcome.

Conclusion

In conclusion although the BSL Act (Wales) will help to raise the status of BSL across Wales it will not directly address the main barrier preventing the introduction of a made-for-Wales GCSE BSL, i.e. an insufficient supply of suitably qualified teachers.

Yours faithfully



¹ [British Sign Language update | Qualifications Wales](#)