

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

Ymchwiliad: Bil Iaith Arwyddion Prydain (Cymru)

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Sir Gâr

Welsh Parliament

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Inquiry: British Sign Language (Wales) Bill

Evidence from: Camarthenshire County Council



Eich cyf / Your ref:

Gofynner am / Please ask for:

Fy nghyf / My ref:

Llinell Uniongyrchol / Direct Line:

Dyddiad / Date: 8th September 2025

E-bost / E-mail: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Second Clerk, Equality & Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament

Dear [REDACTED]

I write on behalf of Carmarthenshire County Council in response to the consultation on the general principles and the need for legislation regarding the proposed British Sign Language (BSL) (Wales) Bill. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important process and recognise the significance of promoting and facilitating the use of BSL across Wales.

In principle, we strongly support the central objective of the Bill to advance equality and remove barriers for deaf people, their families, and BSL users. We believe that recognising BSL legally and promoting its use aligns with Wales's commitment to inclusivity, equal rights, and access to public services for all citizens.

The proposal to ensure BSL users are not treated less favourably than those who speak Welsh or English is both fair and necessary. This principle echoes broader equality legislation and complements Wales's bilingual ethos, respecting linguistic diversity and cultural heritage, and these are principles that are embraced in our Core Values.

We recognise that progress has been made in support services for deaf people, but more needs to be achieved, particularly regarding access to education, health, public services, and employment, so the reason why legislation is essential therefore, in our view, is to ensure the following:

- Establish a clear legal status for BSL, ensuring consistency and accountability across Wales.
- Mandate public bodies to consider the needs of BSL users proactively, not as an afterthought.
- Address disparities in opportunity and access that persist despite voluntary or piecemeal improvements.
- Provide a statutory framework for ongoing improvement, transparent monitoring, and enforcement.

Additionally, we welcome the proposal to establish a BSL Adviser. Such a post will be vital in championing the rights of BSL users, overseeing compliance, and providing expert guidance and advocacy.

In considering the potential benefits and implications of the Bill, we would include:

- Improve the accessibility of public information, services, and education for BSL users.
- Raise awareness about BSL and deaf culture among service providers and the wider public.
- Encourage training and capacity-building for frontline staff in BSL communication.
- Contribute to the removal of social and economic barriers faced by deaf individuals and their families.

However, as with any new legislation, we have to make sure that we are adequately resourced or we run the real risk of setting ourselves up to fail. Current budgets within Local Government are already stretched to the limit, so any additional duties are unlikely to be delivered adequately without additional resources. In this respect, here are some of the considerations that we believe need to be taken into account to support the effective delivery of the introduction of the Bill:

- Resourcing: Sufficient funding and resources for local authorities, schools, healthcare providers, and public bodies to deliver on new statutory obligations.
- Training: Investment in BSL training at all levels, particularly for those delivering public services.
- Engagement: Ongoing consultation with deaf communities and BSL users to ensure their voices remain central in policy development and delivery.
- Monitoring: Robust mechanisms to measure progress, identify gaps, and address challenges collaboratively.

Finally, we fully support the commitment to promoting the rights and well-being of BSL users and the general principles of the need for legislation as outlined in the consultation. As such, we look forward to further engagement as the Bill is developed and scrutinised.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name and title]