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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol | Equality and Social Justice Committee

Bil Iaith Arwyddion Prydain (Cymru) | British Sign Language (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan Cyngor Sir Fynwy | Evidence from Monmouthshire County Council

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### **What are your views on the general principles of the Bill?**

We, generally, do not think there is a need for this Bill. The Equality Act should be sufficient to ensure all protected characteristics are treated fairly and with equity. This includes the use of BSL. We agree that there should be provision to promote and facilitate the use of BSL and its tactile forms in Wales; improve access to education, health and public services in BSL and, support the removal of barriers that exist for deaf people and their families in education, health, public services, support services and in the workplace. We also agree that we should ensure that deaf communities have a voice in the design and delivery of services to ensure they meet their needs. In Monmouthshire, we are working towards Access for All Forums which would include the views of deaf communities in the design and delivery of services that they use.

### **What are your views on the Bill's key provisions (set out below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?**

The promotion and facilitation of the use of BSL is welcomed as well as the publication of a national strategy and guidance. However, we would like a clearer understanding of what the duty of a Welsh Minister would be. If the idea is to be on a par with the Welsh Language Measures, this would take an enormous amount of resource that Public Bodies do not have. The idea is useful but we have serious concerns about the costs and level of expectation, and the resources needed if it were to be on a par with the Welsh Language Measures, which are very costly and time consuming. Albeit completely necessary. Welsh Government needs to be seen to lead by example. We feel there should be a report from WG assessing their internal progress.

### **What are your views on the Bill's key provisions (set out below), in particular are they workable and will they deliver the stated policy intention?**

**1 – A duty on Welsh Ministers to promote and facilitate the use of BSL**

**2 - A duty on Welsh Ministers to publish national strategy and guidance**

**3 - A duty on Welsh Ministers to publish BSL guidance**

**4 - A duty on specified public bodies to publish BSL plans**

**5 - The appointment of a BSL adviser**

**6 - Reporting duties to be imposed on the public bodies and Welsh Ministers in relation to these duties.**

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**How appropriate are the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate Legislation?**

**Are there any barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions and does the Bill take account of them?**

As a Public Body, we feel deaf people should be able to access all services equitably. However, barriers do exist within all areas given current resources. We address these on a 121 basis, providing BSL when it is asked for or needed. The cost, resources and capacity for staff needs to be taken into account and will be a major barrier. Public services will need to be given significant resources to meet the expectations and any standards agreed. We would need to give consideration to many system/process changes, which would put strain on many already stretched managers.

**What are your views on the assessment of the financial implications of the Bill as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum?**

As already mentioned, the financial implications are substantial and resources will need to be given to Public Bodies in order to carry out the duties of this Bill.

**Are there any other issues that you would like to raise about the Bill and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum?**

**Anything else?**