

British Sign Language (Wales) Act 2026

2026 asc 8

CONTENTS

Introduction

1 British Sign Language

Promoting BSL

2 Welsh Ministers' duty to promote BSL
3 National BSL strategy
4 BSL guidance

Listed public body BSL plans

5 BSL plans

Adviser to the Welsh Ministers

6 BSL adviser

Reporting

7 Reports by listed public bodies
8 Reports by the Welsh Ministers

General

9 Meaning of "listed public body"
10 Regulations
11 Coming into force
12 Short Title

Schedule - BSL adviser

British Sign Language (Wales) Act 2026

An Act of Senedd Cymru to promote the use of British Sign Language in Wales.

[27 April 2026]

Having been passed by Senedd Cymru and having received the assent of His Majesty, it is enacted as follows:

Introduction

1 British Sign Language

(1) References in this Act to "BSL" are to—

(a) the visual form of British Sign Language, and

(b) the tactile form of British Sign Language used and understood by some deafblind people.

(2) But the references to BSL in sections 3(4)(b), 4(3)(b), 5(8), 7(2), 8(3)(c), and paragraph 1 of the Schedule, are to the visual form only.

Promoting BSL

2 Welsh Ministers' duty to promote BSL

The Welsh Ministers must promote and facilitate the use of BSL.

3 National BSL strategy

(1) In order to fulfil the duty under section 2, the Welsh Ministers must prepare and publish a national strategy (a "BSL strategy").

(2) The BSL strategy must—

(a) describe how the Welsh Ministers intend to—

(i) promote and facilitate the use of BSL in the exercise of their functions;

(ii) encourage listed public bodies to promote and facilitate the use of BSL in the exercise of their functions (including by giving guidance under section 4);

(b) include targets to increase or maintain—

(i) the number of BSL translators and interpreters available for the purpose of exercising the functions mentioned in paragraph (a), and

(ii) the number of persons available for the purpose of teaching and assessing those BSL translators and interpreters;

(c) set out what information about the use of BSL in Wales was obtained and considered for the purpose of preparing the strategy.

(3) The Welsh Ministers must—

(a) publish the BSL strategy within 18 months beginning with the day after the date on which this Act is brought into force;

(b) review the BSL strategy at least once in every period of 6 years beginning with the day after the strategy is first published and, if they revise it, publish the revised version.

(4) The Welsh Ministers must—

(a) lay the BSL strategy, and any revised version of it, before Senedd Cymru, and

(b) ensure that it is available in BSL.

(5) In preparing the BSL strategy, and any revised version of it, the Welsh Ministers must involve—

(a) the BSL adviser (see section 6),

(b) such representatives of BSL signers as the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate, and

(c) any other persons the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.

(6) The requirement to involve the persons mentioned in subsection (5) includes—

(a) providing them with an opportunity to make representations about the content at the beginning of the process,

(b) seeking their views at a formative stage of preparing a draft proposal, and

(c) otherwise involving them throughout the process by—

(i) providing sufficient information to enable them to properly consider what is proposed, and

(ii) providing sufficient time to enable them to adequately consider what is proposed and respond.

4 BSL guidance

(1) The Welsh Ministers must issue guidance to listed public bodies about how they may promote and facilitate the use of BSL in the exercise of their functions.

(2) In relation to the guidance referred to in subsection (1), the Welsh Ministers—

(a) must issue the guidance no later than the date on which the BSL strategy is published in accordance with section 3(3), and

(b) may issue revised guidance at any time.

(3) The Welsh Ministers must—

(a) publish any guidance issued in accordance with this section, and

(b) ensure that it is available in BSL.

(4) Before issuing the guidance, the Welsh Ministers must consult—

(a) the BSL adviser,

(b) such representatives of BSL signers as the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate, and

(c) any other persons the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.

Listed public body BSL plans

5 BSL plans

(1) A listed public body must prepare and publish a BSL plan that—

(a) describes how it intends to promote and facilitate the use of BSL in the exercise of its functions;

(b) describes how it intends to follow guidance issued under section 4, or explains why it does not intend to do so;

(c) contains such other information as the Welsh Ministers may prescribe by regulations.

(2) The listed public body must publish its plan within 12 months beginning with the day after the BSL strategy is published in accordance with section 3(3)(a).

(3) The listed public body must review its plan—

(a) if directed to do so by the Welsh Ministers;

(b) after any revised version of the BSL strategy is published.

(4) A direction under subsection (3)(a) must state the reasons for giving the direction.

(5) If the listed public body decides to revise its plan following a review, it must publish the revised version of the plan as soon as is reasonably practicable.

(6) In preparing its plan or any revised version of it, the listed public body must involve—

(a) such representatives of BSL signers as it considers appropriate, and

(b) any other persons it considers appropriate.

(7) The requirement to involve the persons mentioned in subsection (6) includes—

(a) providing them with an opportunity to make representations about the content at the beginning of the process,

(b) seeking their views at a formative stage of preparing a draft proposal, and

(c) otherwise involving them throughout the process by—

(i) providing sufficient information to enable them to properly consider what is proposed, and

(ii) providing sufficient time to enable them to adequately consider what is proposed and respond.

(8) The listed public body must send any plan published under this section to the Welsh Ministers and ensure that it is available in BSL.

Adviser to the Welsh Ministers

6 BSL adviser

(1) The Welsh Ministers must appoint a person as their BSL adviser, and persons to be members of a panel to assist the BSL adviser.

(2) The BSL adviser may—

(a) provide information or advice to the Welsh Ministers in relation to their functions under this Act;

(b) provide information or advice, with the Welsh Ministers' agreement, to any person in relation to promoting and facilitating the use of BSL in Wales;

(c) consult the panel in relation to any information or advice to be provided in accordance with paragraphs (a) or (b).

(3) The BSL adviser may provide the information or advice mentioned in subsection (2)(a) of the adviser's own accord or in response to a request made by the Welsh Ministers.

(4) Where the BSL adviser receives a request from the Welsh Ministers under subsection (3), the adviser must provide the information or advice as soon as is reasonably practicable.

(5) If the BSL adviser requests that a listed public body provides the adviser with information for the purpose of the exercise of any of the adviser's functions, the body must comply with the request unless it considers that doing so would conflict with its duties or have an adverse effect on the exercise of its functions.

(6) If a listed public body decides not to comply with a request under subsection (5), it must explain why to the BSL adviser in writing.

(7) The Schedule makes further provision about the BSL adviser and the panel.

Reporting

7 Reports by listed public bodies

(1) Within 12 months beginning with the day after it publishes its BSL plan under section 5 or any revised version of it, a listed public body must prepare and publish a report that—

(a) describes what it has done to implement the most recent version of the plan, and

(b) if it has not implemented something, explains why not.

(2) The listed public body must send any report published under this section to the Welsh Ministers and ensure that it is available in BSL.

8 Reports by the Welsh Ministers

(1) The Welsh Ministers must prepare and publish a report that assesses the progress made in promoting and facilitating the use of BSL in accordance with this Act.

(2) For the purpose of preparing the report, the Welsh Ministers must obtain appropriate information about the use of BSL in Wales on a sufficiently regular basis to enable them to assess progress.

(3) The Welsh Ministers must—

(a) publish a report under subsection (1) at least once in every period of 3 years beginning with the day after the BSL strategy is first published,

(b) lay the report before Senedd Cymru, and

(c) ensure that the report is available in BSL.

(4) For the purpose of preparing a report under this section, the Welsh Minsters may require a listed public body to provide them with such information as they may specify in writing.

(5) A report published under this section must include an explanation of the consideration given by the Welsh Ministers as to whether to amend the list of public bodies referred to in section 9(1) in accordance with section 9(2).

(6) In preparing a report under this section, the Welsh Ministers must consult—

(a) the BSL adviser,

(b) such representatives of BSL signers as the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate, and

(c) any other persons the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.

General

9 Meaning of "listed public body"

(1) For the purposes of this Act, each of the following persons is a "listed public body"—

(a) a county council or county borough council in Wales;

(b) a Local Health Board;

(c) the following NHS Trusts—

(i) Public Health Wales NHS Trust;

(ii) Velindre University NHS Trust;

(iii) Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust;

(d) the following special health authorities established under section 22 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 (c. 42)—

(i) Digital Health and Care Wales;

(ii) Health Education and Improvement Wales.

(2) The Welsh Ministers may by regulations amend subsection (1) by—

(a) adding a devolved Welsh authority,

(b) removing a listed public body, or

(c) amending the description of a listed public body.

(3) Before making regulations that amend subsection (1), the Welsh Ministers must consult—

(a) the BSL adviser,

(b) such representatives of BSL signers as the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate, and

(c) any other persons the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.

(4) In subsection (2)(a), "devolved Welsh authority" has the meaning given in section 157A of the Government of Wales Act 2006 (c. 32).

10 Regulations

(1) A power to make regulations under this Act—

(a) is exercisable by Welsh statutory instrument;

(b) includes the power to make different provision for different purposes;

(c) includes the power to make incidental, supplementary, consequential, transitory, transitional or saving provision.

(2) Regulations under section 9(2) are subject to the Senedd approval procedure.

(3) Regulations under section 5(1)(c) are subject to the Senedd annulment procedure.

11 Coming into force

This Act comes into force on the day after the day this Act receives Royal Assent.

12 Short Title

This Act may be referred to as—

(a) the British Sign Language (Wales) Act 2026, or

(b) Deddf Iaith Arwyddion Prydain (Cymru) 2026.

SCHEDULE

(as introduced by section 6)

BSL ADVISER

BSL adviser

1 The Welsh Ministers must be satisfied that the person appointed as BSL adviser—

(a) is able to communicate effectively in BSL, and

(b) has appropriate personal understanding of the experiences of BSL signers.

2 In order to be satisfied as to the matters referred to in paragraph 1, the Welsh Ministers must seek the advice of a BSL signer.

3 The person appointed as BSL adviser holds office in accordance with the terms of the appointment.

4 The Welsh Ministers may pay remuneration, expenses and allowances to the BSL adviser.

5 The Welsh Ministers may pay—

(a) pensions to, or in respect of, the BSL adviser;

(b) amounts for or towards provision of pensions to, or in respect of, persons who have been the BSL adviser.

6 The Welsh Ministers may provide the BSL adviser with such staff, accommodation, equipment and other facilities as the Welsh Ministers consider necessary for the exercise of the BSL adviser's functions.

Panel

7 Before appointing a person as a member of the panel, the Welsh Ministers must consult the BSL adviser.

8 A person appointed as a member of the panel holds office in accordance with the terms of the appointment.

9 The Welsh Ministers may pay remuneration, expenses and allowances to a person appointed as a member of the panel.