



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Letter to National Deaf Children's Society Cymru and Signature on BSL GCSE

Letter to National Deaf Children's Society Cymru and Signature on decision by Qualifications Wales to suspend development of the British Sign Language GCSE in Wales.

First published: 5 December 2024

Last updated: 5 December 2024

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/letter-national-deaf-childrens-society-cymru-and-signature-bsl-gcse-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

Ein cyf/Our ref DC/JH/10272/24

Jane Hutt AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Lynne Neagle AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

14 November 2024

Dear Susan and Lindsay,

Thank you for your letter received on 4th October in respect of the decision taken by Qualifications Wales to suspend the development of the British Sign Language (BSL) GCSE in Wales and for your offer to meet to discuss further.

Welsh Government remains committed to supporting BSL and to furthering the use, knowledge and expertise of the language in Wales. It is our intention to design and develop policy which delivers the greatest positive impact for the BSL signing community of Wales, making provisions to promote and facilitate the use of BSL and its tactile forms and removing existing language barriers. We believe we can make a positive impact with our collaborative and inclusive approach and we thank both the National Deaf Children's Society Cymru and Signature for engaging with officials as they continue to help inform policy developments.

Wales is rightfully proud to be the first part of the UK to include BSL in its curriculum alongside English, Welsh and other languages. We have worked with BSL practitioners and other experts, including members of the Deaf community to develop guidance on designing a curriculum which includes progression in

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/letter-national-deaf-childrens-society-cymru-and-signature-bsl-gcse-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

BSL for BSL signers as well as guidance for schools choosing to introduce BSL as a second, third or subsequent language.

To support the Curriculum for Wales, Qualifications Wales, as our independent regulator of qualifications (up to degree level), are responsible for leading the Qualified for the Future programme to reform 14-16 qualifications. It is therefore the responsibility of Qualifications Wales to decide when any new qualifications should be introduced; this is not a decision for the Welsh Government.

Whilst we understand your disappointment at Qualifications Wales's decision to suspend the development of the BSL GCSE, it is important to note the complexities highlighted by them in reaching this decision. During the development process where Qualifications Wales worked with stakeholders including the British Deaf Association, Wales Council for Deaf People, academics in sign language and deaf studies, practitioner representatives and providers of deaf awareness training and BSL support in Wales, they identified a number of challenges that needed to be addressed to make the new qualification a success. This included the lack of an official online repository or 'dictionary' for BSL in Wales; and the lack of a qualified teaching workforce for BSL. These are challenges which they judged to present significant risks to the successful delivery of the proposed qualification.

Qualifications Wales have confirmed that they will continue to develop BSL units as part of the new Skills Suite qualification, to be available from 2027. Through this new qualification learners will have the opportunity to be able to develop their practical BSL communication skills for social interaction in everyday settings. The BSL units (from entry level to level 2) will offer an engaging way for learners to demonstrate their BSL skills. The units will be more manageable for schools than a full GCSE and lend themselves to peripatetic teaching, making good use of the existing teacher workforce.

This approach will allow Qualifications Wales to monitor the take-up of these units and, over time, consider whether the 14 to 16 qualifications offer should be

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/letter-national-deaf-childrens-society-cymru-and-signature-bsl-gcse-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

further expanded, which could include a made-for-Wales BSL GCSE. It will also be possible for them to make available to Welsh schools and learners the BSL GCSE currently being developed in England by Ofqual, so that a BSL GCSE is available to English and Welsh learners at the same time.

As this was a decision made by Qualification Wales, if you would like to meet to discuss this further, it would be more appropriate for you to discuss with them in the first instance. Our officials have shared your specific concerns with **Cassy Taylor** (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:cassy.taylor@qualifications.wales>), Executive Director of Qualifications Reform at Qualifications Wales, who would be happy to meet with you to discuss in more detail, including the approach they have taken in reaching this decision and the next steps as they continue the work to develop Skills Suite units in BSL. If subsequent to that meeting you would find it beneficial to meet with us, please contact us via **DSCSSJTCW@gov.wales**. (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:DSCSSJTCW@gov.wales>)

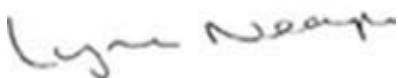
Yours sincerely,



Jane Hutt AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Lynne Neagle AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/letter-national-deaf-childrens-society-cymru-and-signature-bsl-gcse-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

Cabinet Secretary for Education

This document may not be fully accessible.

For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](https://www.gov.wales/accessibility-statement-govwales) (<https://www.gov.wales/accessibility-statement-govwales>).

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/letter-national-deaf-childrens-society-cymru-and-signature-bsl-gcse-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).