

18 March 2024

Celebrating Sign Language Week

Sign Language Week (18-24 March) is a flagship awareness week for British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language to commemorate the first time BSL was recognised as a language in its own right.

Sign Language Week, organised by the [British Deaf Association](#) and held in March each year, aims to raise awareness around sign language, celebrating those who use it, encouraging more people to learn it and preserve British Sign Language (NSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) – indigenous languages of the UK – for future generations.

In total, the number of people estimated to use BSL in the UK is around 151,000, and of these 87,000 are deaf. BSL is not a signed version of English, its syntax and vocabulary are different. This means that individuals who have been deaf since birth or early childhood may have difficulty understanding subtitles or written English.

Last year, BSL was legally recognised as a language and the BSL Act created better recognition and understanding of BSL by:

- Legally recognising BSL as a language for England, Wales, and Scotland,
- Requiring government departments to report on how they are promoting and facilitating the use of BSL,
- Providing guidance to government departments and public bodies on how to meet the needs of people who use BSL as their first or preferred language.

Get involved

Visit the [Sign Language Week website](#) for resources and events to help you celebrate Sign Language Week and find out more, or read [Hannah David's blog](#), published earlier this year, about BSL.