

New Zealand Sign Language Board Action Plan

2016 – 2018

For the promotion and maintenance of New Zealand Sign Language; a strong, vibrant language, recognised and embraced by New Zealand society

**Available in NZSL:
www.odi.govt.nz/nzsl-action-plan**

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Purpose of the New Zealand Sign Language Board Action Plan

The NZSL Board has a vision where:

- NZSL is a strong, vibrant language, recognised and embraced by New Zealand society.
- The right to use NZSL as a first and preferred language is acknowledged.
- There are sufficient opportunities and resources for deaf people, their families/whanau, and other NZSL users to acquire and use NZSL.
- NZSL is accessible and available to all NZSL users.

The purpose of the NZSL Board Action Plan (the Plan) is to support the achievement of this vision by guiding the NZSL Board and government agencies in progressing priorities for NZSL as approved by Cabinet. These priorities are:

1. Include NZSL in education
2. Promote NZSL in the home
3. Provide access to information and services in NZSL
4. Provide access for Māori Deaf
5. Develop interpreter standards

The Plan outlines outcomes for each priority, and has 13 specific actions that will help achieve the outcomes. This also specifies where a government agency will take the lead for implementation of an action, or where it is something that the Office for Disability Issues (as secretariat) will do on behalf of the NZSL Board.

It is expected that implementation of the Plan will also provide an opportunity to develop a shared understanding of the key issues that need to be addressed.

Background

Role of the NZSL Board

The NZSL Board was established by Cabinet in May 2014 and the founding members were appointed in May 2015. This followed recommendations from an Experts Advisory Group convened by the Office for Disability Issues in response to a Human Rights Commission inquiry into NZSL from July 2012 to June 2013. The inquiry found that NZSL is crucial to the ability of Deaf people to learn, communicate and participate in society.

The work of the NZSL Board will also help the Government meet its commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its obligations under the NZSL Act 2006.

The purpose of the NZSL Board is to:

- promote and maintain the use of NZSL by ensuring the development, preservation and acquisition of the language
- ensure the rights of deaf people and NZSL users to use NZSL as outlined in the NZSL Act 2006 and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other national and relevant international legislation
- provide expert advice to government and the community on NZSL.

The NZSL Board has responsibilities across leadership, advice, strategy and coordination and monitoring.

For more information on the NZSL Board, please refer to the Cabinet paper and Terms of Reference on the Office for Disability Issues website: www.odi.govt.nz/nzsl-board-tor

How the NZSL Board Action Plan was developed

In October 2015, the Office for Disability Issues facilitated, on behalf of the NZSL Board, nationwide consultation with the NZSL community. The purpose of this consultation was to identify the key issues under each of the priorities agreed by Cabinet. This helped make sure that the Plan includes the actions that community feedback identified as most important. The Plan incorporates feedback from over 210 NZSL community members across 10 cities and towns.

There was close alignment between issues identified by the NZSL Board and through community consultation, illustrating the close connection between the NZSL Board and the NZSL community it represents.

The Plan focuses action on where the NZSL Board can add value as an expert national voice on NZSL. This includes where the NZSL Board can:

- undertake work that highlights persistent or emerging challenges and gaps
- complement work already underway by government agencies.

Implementation, monitoring and reporting on the NZSL Board Action Plan

Each action in the Plan will be scoped in detail by the lead agency and agreed with the NZSL Board before implementation starts. This scoping will involve more detailed consultation with other stakeholders, where required. It will also identify when any initial analysis will be completed and who is responsible for considering recommendations for agreement; in some instances this will be the NZSL Board, and in others it will be the responsible government

agency. The agreed scope for each action will be available on the Office for Disability Issues website.

The NZSL Board will report publically and refresh the Plan on an annual basis. This process will follow a stocktake of work completed in the previous year, alongside consideration of emerging issues and priorities.

The NZSL Board will also report annually to the Minister for Disability Issues on progress against the priorities for NZSL. The Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development will report to the NZSL Board annually on initiatives related to the Plan.

A monitoring framework will be developed in 2016 to support robust monitoring against the Plan. The Office for Disability Issues will be responsible for supporting the NZSL Board to monitor and report on the Plan.

Priorities, outcomes and actions

This section outlines at a summary level, the specific actions that will contribute towards the outcomes under each priority area, the timing of implementation and who is responsible for it.

1. Include NZSL in education

Outcomes	Actions	Timing	Lead agencies
<p>(1a) There are regular, everyday opportunities for all NZSL users to interact with their signing peers and fluent NZSL users via culturally led initiatives</p> <p>(1b) All staff who work with NZSL users have an appropriate level of NZSL proficiency</p>	<p>The NZSL Board will promote and support through communicating with stakeholders, implementation of the Ministry of Education's NZSL Project Plan 2016 to 2018. The Board currently has a particular interest in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the collection and disaggregation of relevant data on deaf children and children who use NZSL exploring the establishment of NZSL Hubs and local language nests, including technology-based solutions review of NZSL training for staff who work with deaf students and students who use NZSL, including opportunities and incentives to increase NZSL proficiency 	2016	NZSL Board with secretariat support from the Office for Disability Issues
<p>(1c) NZSL users have sufficient access to NZSL support and resources to enable realisation of their academic and social development</p>	<p>The NZSL Board will provide advice on key education initiatives, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementation of the Ministry of Education's NZSL Position Statement, including access to NZSL supports Workforce capability and capacity, including in early childhood education 	To commence in 2016 (however timeframes for input will vary based on when Ministry of Education work takes place)	NZSL Board with secretariat support from the Office for Disability Issues
<p>(1d) All deaf students have exposure to Deaf role models across a variety of jobs and levels in education</p>	Investigate and report on barriers (and potential solutions) to Deaf people taking leadership and other roles in Deaf education.	Report completed by end 2016, implementation of agreed recommendations to follow	Office for Disability Issues
<p>(1e) NZSL users can access post-secondary and tertiary education and learning opportunities on an equal basis with others</p>	Analyse barriers for NZSL users accessing tertiary education and identify appropriate solutions.	Report completed by end 2016, implementation of agreed recommendations to follow.	Office for Disability Issues and the Tertiary Education Commission

2. Promote NZSL in the home

Outcomes	Actions	Timing	Lead agencies
(2a) Families with deaf children have early and on-going access to accurate sign language information to help them make decisions about language options for their deaf children.	Scope options to ensure information provided to parents of deaf children is timely, relevant, independent and appropriate. Include examining referral pathways and information that is currently provided through audiologists and other relevant professionals.	Report completed by end 2016, implementation of agreed recommendations to follow.	Ministry of Health
(2b) Families with deaf children and those who use NZSL have early and on-going access to acquisition of NZSL and can learn from fluent NZSL users.	Explore opportunities to strengthen how deaf babies, children and young people are supported to use NZSL at home as well as at school, in particular looking at early acquisition, learning from fluent NZSL users and the inclusion of families, whānau and communities.	Report completed by end of 2016, implementation of agreed recommendations to follow.	Ministry of Education

3. Provide access to services and information in NZSL

Outcomes	Actions	Timing	Lead agencies
(3a) Deaf people and NZSL users have the opportunity to participate in areas of society that are important to them on an equal basis with others	Investigate barriers to NZSL users participating in and contributing to community, social and civic life through NZSL and identify appropriate solutions.	Report completed by end 2016/17, implementation of agreed recommendations to follow.	Office for Disability Issues
(3b) NZSL users have access to important and relevant information on core government services in NZSL	Scope options to improve the consistency of access to and quality of core government information and services in NZSL, including by completing a stocktake of the existence and awareness of NZSL policies.	Developed by 2016/17	Office for Disability Issues
(3c) Easy access to current information on NZSL for all current and future NZSL users	Explore options to develop and implement an online NZSL hub.	Report completed by end 2016, implementation of agreed options to follow.	Office for Disability Issues

4. Provide access for Māori Deaf

Outcomes	Actions	Timing	Lead agencies
(4a) Māori Deaf are culturally competent, active participants in their whānau, hapu, iwi and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate options to increase NZSL teaching and learning opportunities on Marae and in Maori community places, e.g. wananga, Maori providers, etc • Investigate issues and potential solutions to increase the number of trilingual interpreters. 	Report completed by end 2016/17, implementation of agreed recommendations to follow	Office for Disability Issues
(4b) Māori Deaf women, and Deaf youth take up roles in areas of their choosing	Support the capacity development of Māori Deaf women, and Deaf youth, including by connecting them with mainstream leadership opportunities by ensuring the NZSL Fund is used proactively to support suitable community initiatives.	NZSL Fund round 2016/17	NZSL Board with secretariat support from the Office for Disability Issues

5. Develop interpreter standards

Outcomes	Actions	Timing	Lead agencies
(5a) Professional NZSL interpreting is high quality, reliable and appropriate for the situation.	Analyse international evidence and relevant New Zealand experience on sign language interpreting standards to inform future development of interpreting services.	Report completed by end 2016, implementation of agreed recommendations to follow	Office for Disability Issues