

PE1777/D

Petitioner submission of 3 December 2020

I understand from John Swinney's first submission on the 28th of February 2020 that although the government cannot intervene on what Schools and Local Authorities decide to teach in schools, they do however have a "**BSL National Plan**", a goal of which "**includes an ambition that more pupils will be able to learn BSL at school.**"

However, for this to be possible more support needs to be provided to Local Authorities.

Within South Lanarkshire Council, there are a total of 137 Schoolsⁱ including 123 Primary Schools, 9 Secondary Schools and 5 Special Need Schools. However, only 2 (Calderside Academy and Glenlee Primary School) teach BSL as part of their curriculum. Glenlee Primary School is located next to Hamilton School for the Deaf, which is excluded from the list as they use BSL as their natural form of communication. Why are there so few schools?

I asked South Lanarkshire Council what support is there for schools wanting to teach BSL in schools and do they find that there is sufficient support from the Scottish Government in providing the necessary teaching equipment to teach the language.

They told me that access to resources/materials is not a barrier. The challenge for schools is the availability and supply of qualified BSL teachers/tutors. It is also their understanding is that this is a national issue.

This re-highlights the message that support for Local Authorities is needed and Parliament can change that. My proposal for the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee is to hold a debate in the Scottish Parliament on this issue and decide either to setup whether a plan should be setup similar to the STEM teacher education bursaryⁱⁱ (setup by the Scottish Government to give a bursary of £20,000 to students starting a PGDE ITE course in either maths, computing science, technical education, physics, chemistry and home economics) to include students learning to teach BSL as a language or to update the STEM teacher education bursary by renaming it to "**STEM+ teacher education bursary**" by adding people who are learning to teach the language BSL through a PGDE ITE course also.

Although this would not solve the problem fully with the shortage of BSL teachers I think it would drastically encourage the idea of people learning to teach BSL and in result would support Local authorities and schools out sourcing BSL teachers for their school.

John Swinney's submission on the 9th of November 2020 said that "**Queen Margaret University now includes BSL as a core part of its Initial Teacher Education programme**"

I think that this is a great achievement and having BSL Teachers included in the STEM+ teacher education program I am proposing would increase the number of people taking the course as this would support them in not only their teaching career but as a student.

John Swinney also said ***“Our 2019 survey of local authorities on implementation of the 1+2 approach has shown that good progress is being made in the uptake of BSL.”... “We are confident that further growth will be reported by the next survey, and we are optimistic that the growth of BSL through the 1+2 approach will create an appetite for further learning of BSL by hearing pupils.”***

Again this is positive news however in going forward with this progress we should not ignore South Lanarkshire Council’s view that the challenge for schools is the availability and supply of qualified BSL teachers/tutors, and that it is a national issue. In which re-highlights my proposal to Parliament to decide whether we should implement BSL teachers as part of the ***“STEM+ teacher education bursary”*** program I am proposing.

In conclusion, I would like to thank both the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee and John Swinney with their on-going co-operation with this petition as well as this I would like to add a special thanks to Councillor Grant Ferguson and officials at South Lanarkshire Council.

I would like to reiterate that I think it would be beneficial for generations to come and students like me for Parliament to hold a debate in the chamber on the STEM teacher education bursary program that is currently introduced and should be rebranded as ***“STEM+ teacher education bursary program”*** with the introduction of students enrolled in a BSL teaching course to be allowed to access the bursary. I think that again this would tackle the problem South Lanarkshire Council sees as a national issue.

ⁱ [Schools and educational establishments - South Lanarkshire Council](#)

ⁱⁱ [STEM teacher education bursary: eligibility criteria - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)