

Our Vision

In partnership with the BSL community, to be the most creative provider of sign language content in the world.

Our Purpose

- To enrich the lives of the British Sign Language (BSL) community with content made from Deaf perspectives, which informs, educates, entertains and inspires
- to attract the widest possible audience by making the richness and diversity of BSL and Deaf culture available on a broad range of platforms
- to encourage and support the development by Deaf people of the skills required for programme-making.

Our BSL Community

BSLBT, in addition to the obligations it shares with all other broadcasters, has a responsibility to address the needs of the users of Britain's fourth indigenous language, BSL, and of Deaf BSL television programme-makers.

The Deaf community has long been an oppressed minority: BSL, Deaf teachers, history and culture were excluded from the education of D/deaf children, with damaging effects on their literacy, sense of identity and self-belief. Today, film and television can help the community to face the challenges of the 21st century. BSL film and television can play a part in the drive towards full citizenship for Deaf people by informing them about their community, and they can also help Deaf people to interact with wider society and to identify and engage with challenges to their wellbeing.

With this potential in view, BSLBT commissions will strive to reflect Deaf perspectives and develop Deaf ways of programme-making. Equally they will embrace a larger sense of community that includes Deaf minorities: for example, d/Deaf children and their families who have not yet been exposed to BSL, and BSL-using hearing people. The defining characteristic of this larger community will be its language: BSL.

Our BSL

BSL is why BSLBT exists. It is in our name and that of our platform, the BSL Zone. It will always be at the heart of what we do. Like English, BSL is the language of a centuries-old community, evolving with the diversity of its users but rooted in its own history, culture and varieties of creative expression.

The visual qualities of BSL mean that for Deaf people, TV is their 'radio' as well as their television. On radio the human voice can convey the greatest pleasure, information and entertainment. This also applies to BSL, so that sometimes the best 'pictures' exist in the language itself, and do not require further enhancement to be attractive to viewers.

We must respect the language and work towards the highest standards of BSL in our output, both as it is used by presenters and performers, and in the ways in which it is filmed, framed and edited.

Our long-term goal is that our programme-makers should be Deaf people, and until that is possible we will continue to:

- insist that a Deaf person must be the main decision-maker behind every tender we receive
- work towards equal partnerships between Deaf and hearing people
- encourage the development of Deaf people's skills

Our Programming Philosophy

BSLBT seeks to provide content of excellence in as many different genres as possible, including drama, factual and children's programmes.

We encourage ambition and originality and we will strive to support programme-makers in genres in which Deaf TV has had limited opportunity to develop. We aim to deliver at least one major programme each year that is capable of bringing Deaf issues to the attention of the wider world.

All our content immediately becomes part of our online archive so we will continually aim to improve our website and our online services. We will explore ways to offer Deaf people opportunities to learn skills involved in programme-making by using our online channels. We will also consider making some content exclusively for our website.

Our Partnerships – National and International

All Deaf media and media producers are our potential partners and supporters. We will also work with other bodies which have similar aims and objectives (such as Deaf organisations, archives, universities, schools and others) to increase awareness of the opportunities we offer.

We aim to be a beacon for sign language producers and broadcasters in other countries. Developing international partnerships will enable us to license and show other content in sign language.

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