

Police hold 'Access to Justice' event with British Deaf Association



Police Scotland has demonstrated its commitment to working alongside the Scottish Deaf community by holding a partnership event with the British Deaf Association.

The "Access to Justice" visit took place at the West Lothian Civic Centre on Wednesday 24th February.

The aim of this was to improve accessibility of criminal justice systems and identify how we can continue to develop justice services, which are inclusive for everyone in Scotland.

This event was arranged in conjunction with the BDA's 125th Anniversary celebrations.

The group attended the West Lothian Civic Centre where they got a tour of police custody procedures and discussed their experiences of police services.

They were also given an input by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscals service and given a tour of the Sheriff Court by the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service.

After the tour a Q&A session with all partners including the Scottish Legal Aid Board, took place.

This allowed those in attendance to raise any concerns or seek clarity on issues relating to the criminal justice system and its relationship with the Deaf community.

In addition to interpreters there was a number of police

officers and staff members present who have BSL skills allowing a great opportunity to engage directly with attendees.

Superintendent Jim Baird said: "We were delighted to assist in the British Deaf Association 125th anniversary celebrations and facilitate the Access to Justice event at Livingston Civic Centre.

"In addition to being shown police processes and procedures delegates shared their experience of access to justice and identified barriers to the Deaf community.

"Police Officers with British Sign Language skills communicated directly with delegates and interpreters were used in a question and answer session with senior members of staff from Police Scotland, The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, The Scottish Legal Aid Board and The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service.

"This was a very worthwhile event and while we demonstrated our processes to the Deaf community, we learned at least as much from the BDA delegates present about some of the challenges they experience in the legal process. This will assist us in developing and improving our services for Deaf Communities."

Helen Morgans-Wenhold from British Deaf Association said: "The event was a great success and beyond our expectations. We've already received an email requesting another event like this one.

"We are pleased to see that this event has met with some recommendations in the BDA Hate Crime report."

A spokesperson for the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service said: "Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) was delighted to take part in the BDA anniversary event at Livingston Civic Centre yesterday.

“It was a great opportunity for our staff to show delegates our facilities within Livingston Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court and provide them with information on the Scottish Justice system.”

Ruth McQuaid, Equality Champion for COPFS said: “COPFS were delighted to be invited to take part in the recent BDA access to justice event which from our perspective was a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness and share experiences.

“We are always keen to work with criminal justice partners to improve accessibility to the justice system for everyone.”