

Ms Sukh Walia-Chahil  
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Ofcom  
Riverside House  
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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Thursday 13 October

Dear Ms Walia-Chahil,

I am writing in response to Ofcom's recent consultation into a Review of Relay Services. I find it unacceptable that Ofcom is considering the introduction of a highly restricted VR Service in the UK, which would be limited to 30 minutes a month, Monday – Friday between 9am and 5pm.

In the UK there are over 50,000 British Sign Language (BSL) users, who do not currently have equal access to telecommunications. The current Text Relay service has not seen substantial innovation in the past 30 years and as a result, the service is slow and outdated. Furthermore, Text Relay services force BSL users to communicate in their second language, English.

Instead, the UK should be looking to introduce a universal VR service, which would create equal access to telecommunications for BSL users. A restricted service, as suggested by Ofcom is not a suitable approach. By not introducing a universal service, the Government risks contravening the EU Electronic Communications Framework which sets out a legal requirement to ensure that disabled end users enjoy access to telecommunications which are functionally equivalent to those enjoyed by other end-users.

The introduction of a universal VR service would provide Deaf BSL users with equal access to telecommunications. Furthermore, this service should be introduced on a competitive basis. This will lead to an improved quality of service, increased efficiency of operators, reduced costs and greater choice for consumers.

A universal, unrestricted, competitive VR service would provide the UK's Deaf BSL users with the equal access to telecommunications that they deserve.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorely Burt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Lorely Burt MP  
Member of Parliament for Solihull