

Decision to approve an emergency video relay service

This video has been made by Ofcom. We are the UK's regulator for communications services including broadband, home phone and mobile services, as well as TV, radio and post.

In June 2021 we published our decision to introduce emergency video relay in the UK. This will make it easier for deaf British Sign Language users to get the help they need, such as police, ambulance or fire brigade, in emergencies.

Emergency video relay will be available on devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers via a dedicated app and website.

Last year, Ofcom published information about the standards that emergency video relay would have to meet - called the approval criteria. These included:

- Being available 24 hours a day
- Being free to use
- Providing location information to the emergency services (the same as for voice 999 calls)
- Using qualified and experienced interpreters
- Having high technical and quality standards

A company called Sign Language Interactions applied for approval of an emergency video relay service. It set out detailed information about its proposed service and how it would meet all the approval criteria.

In November 2021, Ofcom consulted on its proposal to approve this service. We asked people to say if they agreed. Several deaf people and organisations representing deaf people replied to the consultation supporting our proposal. We also received responses from telecoms providers.

Following the consultation, Ofcom has decided to approve Sign Language Interactions' service.

What happens next?

Telecoms and broadband providers must prepare for the start of emergency video relay in June 2022. This includes arranging to pay the costs of the service and making sure that the mobile data used for emergency video relay is free of charge.

Ofcom will work with organisations representing deaf people to help publicise emergency video relay, including via social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

When emergency video relay is launched in June, we will make an announcement in BSL and English.