

From:

Representing (self or organisation/s): self

The following part(s) of this response are confidential:
Name/contact details/job title

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yes

I confirm that the correspondence supplied with this cover sheet is a formal consultation response that Ofcom can publish. However, in supplying this response, I understand that Ofcom may need to publish all responses, including those which are marked as confidential, in order to meet legal obligations. If I have sent my response by email, Ofcom can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Do you consider that the requirement to ensure equivalent services for disabled end-users would require a mandated VR service in some form for BSL users?

Yes. I think an unrestricted Video Relay Service is the only way to ensure a telecoms service for BSL users which is equivalent to that used by hearing people.

I communicate every day in British Sign Language, and it is the only language where I fully understand what information is being given to me. Allowing me to use services such as the Text Relay gives partial access, but does not allow me to have full access to what the end user is telling me i.e. voice tone, expressions and the things that make having the involvement of a third party a often stilted and delayed experience.

In New Zealand, telecommunications has been asserted as a human right, and has been made possible through Crown funding. You can find more information here <http://www.reachnzrelay.co.nz/How/VRS/>

I quote from this page

"By using sign language over the full motion video, this allows the sign language user to fully express in their natural language and convey facial expression and cues to ensure nothing gets lost in the translation."

Note this point - nothing gets lost in the translation"

Many deaf people have lower literacy skills due to poor education and using Text relay service often means many misunderstandings and messages lost in translation. Enabling a user to communicate in their native or preferred language means they can be fully participating members of society, and contribute something back without barriers.

Do you agree that a restricted service would be more proportionate in providing equivalence for BSL users than an unrestricted service?

No. I do not agree with the proposal to impose restrictions on access to VRS. An unrestricted Video Relay Service is the only way to ensure a telecoms service for BSL users which is equivalent to that used by hearing people.

How would a hearing person feel if they had to involve a third party in all phone calls, and not be able to hear the response, having to read it being typed back? Even worse, to have this restricted to only 30 minutes a month.

Communication with hearing people is already difficult. To restrict conversations to family members, to friends, to important employer relationships would be a violation of a deaf person's right to conduct business and their personal affairs.

Please provide your views on Methods 1 - 5 for a restricted VR service discussed above. Are there any other methods that are not mentioned that we should consider?

I do not agree with any of the proposed methods of restricting access to VRS. An unrestricted Video Relay Service is the only way to ensure a telecoms service for BSL users which is equivalent to that used by hearing people.

Do you agree that a monthly allocation of minutes combined with a weekday/business hours service would be the most appropriate means to restricting the service?

No. I do not agree with the proposal to impose these restrictions on access to VRS. An unrestricted Video Relay Service is the only way to ensure a telecoms service for BSL users which is equivalent to that used by hearing people.

Business is only one aspect of a deaf person's life. In order to be a fully participating and contributing member of society, we need This is particularly critical in emergencies and issues that occur after of hours. Situations outlined include: the fact that getting to a minicom is not always possible in an emergency putting people's lives at danger, not many deaf people have minicoms, If new technology is incorporated into this service, there is nothing to stop deaf people from accessing the VRS via their smartphone.

Again I enforce the fact that all contributing members of society have 24/7 access to telecommunications. Deaf people are being treated as second class citizens.

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This mail is sent via consultation response form on VRS Today
<http://www.vrstoday.com>