
PRESS RELEASE

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National Video Relay Service Awarded



Sign Language Interactions are pleased to announce that they will continue as delivery partner for 'contactSCOTLAND-BSL'. Scotland's first national video relay service with Deaf people.

contactSCOTLAND-BSL enables the Scottish Deaf Community/Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users, the means to contact any of the 130+ Scottish public bodies as well as any of the 1,000s of third sector organisations, by accessing an on-line BSL/English interpreter who relays the conversation between the two parties. Providing an equitable service which can be so easily taken for granted by the wider population.

The award of the contract, after an open tender competition, follows a highly successful year-long pilot that was funded and evaluated by the Scottish government. Over 6,000 calls were made by deaf people during the pilot and this number is expected to substantially increase over the next three years.

BSL users can access this unique national service by PCs/Laptops with a webcam and internet connection or, as over 90% of incoming calls do so, by smartphones and tablets. All that is required is having the 'app' installed and access to Wi-Fi. The service operates between 8am to 12 midnight, 7 days per week, 365 day per year.

Provision of a video relay service assists public services meet their legal obligations in relation to the Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010, Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011 and British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. Public and Third Sector services will also be able to use contactSCOTLAND-BSL to contact a Deaf BSL user. While the contactSCOTLAND-BSL service will not remove the need for face-to-face interpreting provision, it will increase telephone accessibility between BSL users and public services.

Paul Tipling, BSL user from Greenock commented on the service, “That is really good to know that not only public bodies can be contacted but also charities and voluntary organisations are now included. ... I no longer have to rely on someone to telephone for me. Making contact using contactSCOTLAND means I have clear communication in my terms.”

Andrew Dewey, Director – Sign Language Interactions said, “We are particularly pleased to be able to continue delivering this national relay interpreting service which is unique in the UK. Our primary aim is to provide equal access to Scotland’s 1,000s of Deaf BSL users. It’s easy to forget that just making a call to the council, for example, can be challenging if your main and preferred method of communication is sign language. ContactSCOTLAND-BSL bridges and closes that inequality gap.”

Further information on contactSCOTLAND-BSL can be found at: www.contactsotland-bsl.org

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Sign Language Interactions

Sign Language Interactions is a company that is well established with a proven track record of service delivery within the public, private and voluntary sector. In addition to providing communication support services, we also have experience in working with health boards, local authorities and other organisations to scope out local needs, pilot and deliver services. Sign Language Interactions has grown steadily from its formation. It is now one of the largest providers of language service professionals (LSPs), including sign language interpreters (face to face and on-line), electronic note-takers in the country.

Our mission is:

To facilitate communication between Deaf and hearing people, so that language is no longer a barrier to understanding and opportunities.

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The VRS platform used by Sign Language Interactions is called MMX, provided by nWise (Sweden), the leading worldwide provider of telephony/telecommunications specifically for deaf and deafblind people and delivered and maintained by InterpreterNow (Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire UK) who provide service management and technical support.

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