



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Market review of British Sign Language and communications provision for people who are deaf or have hearing loss

Call for evidence

January 2016

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Introduction

The Minister for Disabled People has announced a review of the communication and language support market. It is being led by the Department for Work and Pensions, in collaboration with other government departments, organisations that work for and with people who are deaf, deafblind or have a hearing loss, and the communication and language profession.

The review will determine the present state of the market in support that facilitates communication for people who are deaf, deafblind or have hearing loss and those that need to engage with them. The review will look at the provision in the UK as a whole and will include all forms of communication and language support. It will then identify future developments and consider how they could affect the market for these services in the near future (5 to 10 years). The resulting report will inform interested parties and support future strategy and policy decisions.

The main areas of focus of the review are:

- Demand
- Supply
- Technology
- Forward Look

The call for evidence

Purpose

We are now looking for evidence that will help us understand the current state of the market, its strengths and weaknesses and possible opportunities and challenges.

This call for evidence will be one of the methods used to gather information.

Evidence submitted will be used to inform a final report of the review.

Who is this call for evidence aimed at?

All interested organisations and individuals are invited to make a submission that have information or experience that is relevant to the review. In particular, currently unpublished data and research is of interest.

Scope

The call for evidence will gather information on the provision in the UK as a whole and will include all forms of communication and language support for who are deaf, deafblind or have hearing loss and those that need to engage with them. However, we would welcome a wide range of evidence, drawn from both UK and international sources.

Duration

The call for evidence period begins on 4 January 2016 and runs until 4 March 2016.

Call for evidence questions

The review team now invite individuals and organisations to submit evidence to inform the review, against the following questions. These address the main areas of focus for the review and then feed into a 'forward look' to explore factors that may affect the provision of these services in the near future and their possible impact of on the market.

Responses do not have to answer all the questions and can just focus on those within a particular field of interest.

Further information on each area of focus is given below under 'Topics for consideration'.

Demand

1. What is size and value of the demand for the different types of communication and language support in the UK?
2. How this demand might change in the future?

Supply

3. What is the number of communication and language professionals nationally and the type and level of skills that are on offer?
4. How this supply might change in the future?

Technology

5. What are the types of technology currently available that facilitate communication and the future developments in the pipeline?
6. How might an increasing uptake of both current technology and new developments affect the market for communication and language services in the future?

Topics for consideration

This list highlights the main topics for consideration for each area of focus and is not exhaustive.

Demand

- Definitions of the different methods of communication and language support including Communication Support Workers (CSW) and Intervenors, the skills that are needed and relevant qualifications
- Estimated size of the Deaf population with a breakdown of by age and preferred communication methods
- Current patterns of usage in terms of volume and value (including usage by hearing people)
- Geographic variations
- Areas where communication professionals would be expected to have further experience and knowledge e.g. work place specific knowledge
- Estimated unmet and potential demand by number and method
- An assessment of the available choice of different methods and the ability of users to select the most appropriate or preferred method
- Areas where the provision is required e.g. employment, physical and mental health, legal, child and adult education, social events, public events, private business (bank services etc.)

Supply

- The type and number of communication and language professionals nationally and the type and level of skills that are on offer
- The relevant qualifications
- Registration bodies
- Communication and language professional's employment status (e.g. part time, freelance, employed directly or through agencies)
- Service providers (e.g. agencies, number of providers and size)
- Rates charged including agency fees
- Methods of delivery (e.g. face to face, remote)

- Educational routes and the numbers currently in training
- The crossover between support workers employed in education and the 'adult' world
- Possible new educational routes e.g. apprenticeships
- Regulation and career structure of communication and language professional

Technology

- The types of communication that employ technology e.g. Video Relay Services (VRS), text relay
- Current patterns of usage in terms of volume and value
- The new developments that will be available in the near future
- The areas where the use of technology are not appropriate
- The use of cochlea implants and how they can affect the demand and patterns of usage for communication support services
- How technology can improve the convenience, flexibility and ease of access to communication and language support services
- If the use of technology alters the employment patterns of communication professionals (e.g. direct employment, through agencies etc)

Forward look

- How changes in population demographics will affect the market
- How the increasing uptake of current technology will affect demand and supply and patterns of usage.
- The impact of new legislation on the market
- Changes to the supply of communication and language professionals from new routes into the profession
- How new technological developments may impact the market

Call for evidence arrangements

How to Respond

Responses should be limited to five sides of A4 paper, or equivalent.

Please send your responses, or any queries about the subject matter of this call for evidence, to:

- Post:
BSL and Communications Market Review
Disabilities and Work Opportunities Division
Ground Floor
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA
- Email: DHES.COMMENT@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Please ensure your response reaches us by 5pm on 4 March 2016. We welcome responses in written or BSL (video) format, which should be sent or emailed to the above address.

When responding, please state whether you are doing so as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled. We will acknowledge your response. We may be in touch to follow up on your response; if you would prefer us not to do so, please note this when responding.

Alternative formats

This document will be available in a range of formats, including large print, Braille, audio, BSL video/DVD, and Easy Read on request from:

- Post:
BSL and Communications Market Review
Disabilities and Work Opportunities Division
Ground Floor
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

- Email: DHES.COMMENT@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Please be aware that these alternative formats may take some time to prepare, so please let us know as soon as possible if they are required.

How your information will be used

The information you send us may need to be passed to colleagues within the Department for Work and Pensions, other government departments and organisations. It will also be available to external stakeholder organisations and individuals involved in the review. It may be published in a summary of responses received, and in any subsequent review reports.

All information contained in your response, including personal information, may be subject to publication; this may include quotation of your response. By providing information, including personal information, for the purposes of the public consultation exercise, it is understood that you consent to its disclosure and publication. If this is not the case, you should limit any information, including personal information, provided or remove it completely. If you want the information in your response to the consultation to be kept confidential, you should explain why as part of your response although we cannot guarantee to do this.

However, if your information constitutes sensitive personal data and this, combined with other information, may lead to identification of the individual, we will contact you to seek your informed consent before disclosing and/or publishing this information.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies to requests that are made regarding process, reporting and functional information only, but not personal information. Therefore no information should be requested relating to the personal information of individuals under this Act and DWP will not disclose personal information in response to such requests.

The Central Freedom of Information team cannot advise on specific review exercises, only on Freedom of Information issues. More information about the Freedom of Information Act can be found at:

www.dwp.gov.uk/freedom-of-information

If you wish to make a Freedom of Information request relating to this consultation process, please contact:

- Post:
Central FOI Team
Department for Work and Pensions
4th Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA
- Email: Freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk