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Dear Maeve,

During the debate on the Lords Oral Parliamentary Question on Video Relay Service and British Sign Language on 3rd May 2018, you asked whether Video Relay Service would be available for people claiming Universal Credit.

I should explain that Universal Credit is focusing on Assisted Digital where support is provided to help customers who are unable to access services or manage their claim via the internet. This may be to make a claim or maintain their online Universal Credit account. This service is provided usually by local authorities and may mean that a BSL interpreter is needed during this support.

Universal Credit staff can arrange for BSL interpreters if they need to speak to claimants in the office. This is facilitated through our contractor The BigWord, which we use for all other non-disability benefits. Although we would like to roll-out a full service through VRS, we are focusing our resource on disability benefits where this is more likely to be necessary.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the House of Lords Library.

Baroness Buscombe

Minister for Work and Pensions (Lords)