Written Evidence submitted by Susan Gill (ATW0032)

1. I work as Manager for a Supported Living Project for SignHealth in Leeds. I also manage the Outreach service and the Housing Support Service. I work closely with outside agencies on a regular basis. I have an interpreter allowance through ATW which I use in the most effective and economical way possible. In my team there are 9 Deaf staff who also have hours allocated to them. For three years we have used these hours as and when needed but have also booked an interpreter on Fridays to be available to the whole team, whoever is working, as required. This has worked well and has been an economical use of interpreter time - rather than each member of staff booking someone for a 3 hour minimum on Fridays we have one interpreter which we share between us.

2. Due to the proposed changes in Access to Work (AtW):

   The proposed reduction in the amount per hour that will be paid (£25)  
   The information given by AtW advisors that anything over an hour needs to be invoiced and charged separately  
   Confusion on what AtW deem to be acceptable use of AtW funds

   The above have led the interpreter who has worked with the team regularly for 3 years has decided to withdraw because of the effect that all the confusion and fear of getting it wrong and being accused of fraud. The worry is affecting her health.

   This will have a big impact on the ability of the team here to work effectively and efficiently. It adds to the frustration of being profoundly Deaf and working in a hearing environment. Each assignment with outside agencies involves hours of time consuming and frustrating argument about who will meet the cost of the interpreters. This also means that I am sometimes forced to withdraw from attending a meeting or forum or other event because there is no agreement on who will fund the interpreting.

3. Interpreters are starting to refuse work from AtW which means that the Deaf staff are finding it increasingly difficult to find suitably qualified interpreters to work with them on meetings with outside agencies.

4. The interpreters or CSWs who will accept £25 per hour are not suitably qualified to work at the level that we require, especially as we work in mental health and sometimes, for me particularly, at contractual level which requires a high level of skill from the interpreters I use. I would be unable to do my job effectively without the correct support from AtW which is vital for my continued employment.

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