Written evidence submitted by Zafar Iqbal (ATW0100)

This submission has been translated and transcribed from British Sign Language

1. I am profoundly Deaf and work as a building supervisor and film editor; in my role I need to make phone calls for editing issues or building issues, I need information translating for me from written English into British Sign Language (BSL), if there are technical faults I may use YouTube to try and get the information I need to sort out the issue but I do not have an interpreter to help me understand the spoken language videos because Access to Work (ATW) have not provided me with support for this. If I do not know what is wrong and how to fix the problem my work becomes delayed and I fall behind with my daily tasks. The delay in obtaining support from ATW has not been fully explained to me; to try and resolve issues I have to call up (to call ATW I need an interpreter in the first place) and speak with them, it is not easy for a Deaf person to communicate with ATW whereas Hearing people can call up to use the service easily and sort out their problems quickly; Deaf people always seem to experience delays and therefore are not able to do their jobs as quickly or efficiently.

2. As part of my role I have to provide a weekly report stating the tasks I have done throughout the day – I need an interpreter to help me translate from BSL into English to provide this. If I have no interpreter I cannot provide my manager with the information he needs and this means I am not able to carry out my job effectively. Sometimes I need to email companies or technical support regarding issues I have during my working hours, however with no interpreter I cannot translate into English that the Hearing people can understand, my work becomes delayed and I fall behind.

3. ATW do not give specific information with regard to the types of interpreters we can employ for our roles; because my job is so technical and specific I need to employ interpreters who have a good knowledge of technical issues and understand the right jargon in order to work with me to do my job. In the past, when we have managed to access interpreter support, the interpreters have often not been able to understand 100% of the information we are communicating, they have no experience in the area or are under qualified for the job I need them to do. Sometimes I will sign BSL and they will not fully understand what I explain; how can I give an accurate rendition of myself if the interpreter does not understand what I need from them? For example, I once used an interpreter to make a phone call for me to order specific parts for a technical problem I was experiencing, I thought we had clear communication throughout the phone call however when the parts were delivered they were the wrong ones; the interpreter had not understood what I asked for. This further delayed progression for the various jobs I undertake in my role and is frustrating as even though I was provided with support there was still a huge communication breakdown.

4. I think it would be more effective to employ a full time interpreter to work with me in my role, who understands the daily routines and processes I undertake in my job. If they were with me every day they would better
understand the specifics of the area I work and become used to the jargon, meaning our working relationship would be stronger and my communication with Hearing people much clearer and more efficient. If I was given a different interpreter everyday I would have to start from scratch, explaining to them what things are, what the jargon means and what I need from them. This is time wasted when I should be concentrating on my job. I need support that matches what I need.

If an interpreter was contracted for one year for a certain amount of hours a week it would be much more beneficial, but this should be the Deaf person’s choice as to what fits their working role better, not the decision of ATW. But so far, although I have contacted ATW they have not provided me with the hours I need to employ interpreters.

5. ATW often demand written descriptions of what the interpreter has done for me throughout my working day. These daily reports take up valuable time when I could use the interpreter for issues associated with my job, instead of wasting time following ATW protocol. Pinpointing every small task is extremely pedantic.

6. At the moment I am going through an application for support from ATW. This application was started over a year ago and I am still not receiving the support I need. It would be very helpful if ATW employed an interpreter or Deaf member of staff who could take face time or Skype calls from Deaf clients in order to begin the application process and assess their needs. At it stands, ATW have no awareness of the needs of Deaf people. If someone is blind or has learning difficulties, ATW will provide the technology they need in order to fulfil their working requirements. But when it comes to Deaf people who need interpreters ATW support is delayed, complicated, demanding assessment from people who are not qualified to do so or (most of the time) stipulating the hours a Deaf person should receive without any assessment or input from the Deaf person themselves. How can ATW fully understand our needs if they cannot negotiate with their clients in order to make full provision for them?

7. Ideally, within the company I work now I would benefit from employing one interpreter PER TEAM. So the interpreter could be funded from a budget worked out from all the Deaf staff we have employed, meaning ATW would save money and we would have a permanent member of staff who could assist the team and grow with us to understand their role and help us do our jobs.

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