Written evidence submitted by Julian Peedle-Calloo (ATW0104)

Executive Summary:

- 30 hour rule is unworkable
- AtW staff’s lack of knowledge of Deaf people's needs
- The support is invaluable to me and without it I would be unemployed and on benefits
- The need for flexibility (every Deaf person is different and has different needs)

Introduction:

My name is Julian Peedle-Calloo, I work for the BBC as an assistant producer, I’ve worked here for 13 years and AtW has enabled me to progress in my career and move into mainstream TV (Crimewatch, The One Show and Children in Need).

The AtW application and assessment process, from the perspective of employees and employers:

1. My initial application, subsequent applications across the 13 years and reassessment in September 2013 was problem free. This was due to the ‘30 hour rule’ not being implemented and my support package remaining unchanged.

2. This was not my experience when applying for additional support for a filming project. I contacted AtW on the 13th May 2014 to apply for additional funding so I would have two BSL interpreters across the duration of the filming, (1 week) which commences 16th June. I filled out all the relevant information as requested and awaited a reply. On the 5th June I was contacted via email and was asked to resubmit all of my information again. I then telephoned the advisor, they were questioning my support package and why I had that level of support. I was taken aback by this it also made me very worried that my support would be cut and as a consequence I would lose my job - which has been the case for many other persons who have been affected by the AtW cuts. I clarified that this request was for additional support after which I was told my case would be referred to a ‘specialist team.’ I have not heard back from anyone (todays date 18th June). Due to the fact I have had no correspondence, I have had to postpone my filming and I’m still unsure as to whether this will go ahead as I have not heard from AtW.

The adequacy of ongoing support, both in terms of the aids, adaptations and support workers provided through AtW, and the help and advice offered by DWP:
1. My current support package meets my needs as I have full time support from freelance fully qualified NRCPD BSL interpreters. However, it is obvious that DWP staff are unaware of how interpreters work and what the different registration categories are and mean. The advice given does not reflect the current practice for example, the expectancy that I can book an interpreter last minute whereas in reality they need to be booked a month in advance. Currently, the consensus is that there is a policy that AtW will not cover interpreter cancellation fees. So, for example if I am ill (which of course cannot be predicted in advance) AtW will not cover the cost of the interpreter booked that day. This does not reflect the freelance nature by which BSL interpreters work. It does seem that the direct impacts on support on ground level are not considered. The implications and repercussions of decisions made by AtW to those who use the support are not given consideration either.

AtW’s effectiveness in terms of helping disabled people to: secure a job, stay in employment, and develop their careers:

1. AtW has been invaluable to me in my career. Without it I could not have progressed in my career. This is due to me being given full time (over 40 hours per week) support from freelance fully qualified NRCPD registered BSL/English Sign Language Interpreters. I have always managed to underspend on my budget. I would not have been able to progress if I had a salaried interpreter or a Communication support worker/CSW. Without this support I would be unemployed. Just as I am trained and experienced in what I do I need support that reflects this. The competency, ethics and expertise of a CSW is not the same as an interpreter and so makes it inappropriate to have CSW’s in the workplace. By using freelance fully qualified interpreters this guarantees that I can viewed as an equal professional in the workplace and not as disadvantaged and to date having funding from AtW in the manner that I have has allowed this to be the case.

My Recommendations:

2. One point of contact, one caseworker/advisor rather than having to re explain myself to different caseworkers/advisor. Having one point of contact would make the process much easier. Also face-to-face assessments for Deaf people, rather than English based written or spoken. As this is a major barrier and without BSL fully qualified interpreter support I cannot access the process.

3. That AtW is not a benefit, that it brings more money back to the government than they spend on AtW (according to the Sayce report), because it means Deaf and disabled people are earning and paying in taxes, instead of being unemployed and claiming benefits. This also is the case for the Sign Language interpreter’s the scheme pays for as they also pay tax.
4. The permanent cessation of the '30 hour rule', although this has not affected me yet, if I was affected by this then I would be unable to continue in my employment. I have also seen firsthand how it has affected other Deaf people.

5. The logistics and practicalities of the '30 hour rule' be investigated. The liabilities of the ‘30 hour rule’ mean that the quality and expertise of interpreters would be lost. It does support the nature of a workplace and would be detrimental to both the interpreter and the Deaf person.

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