Written evidence submitted by P Joyce (ATW0140)

Executive Summary:

- Without Access to Work I would not be able to work.
- Access to Work are flexible letting me choose who I need for my communication needs as a Deaf person with PTSD including my close support network
- Recommendations are made suggesting improvement to information and access for Deaf and about mental health provision, and to continue flexibility that I was shown 3 years ago.

Introduction:

I am self-employed and own a shop. I need a lot of support for communication BSL/English. My first language is a different European Sign Language. This is important for the person communicating with me to know because I have PTSD. When my PTSD is triggered, I need more of my first language. PTSD is in my life much longer than it needs to be because of poor access to health services for Deaf people.

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

1. 3 years ago I felt my communication needs and PTSD were respected and the hours, hourly rate and who I used for communication support reflected this.

2. Now my review is due, no-one informed me so suddenly I am without support. I struggle to contact the phone number given or read emails. The advisor has not contacted me in the 7 working days promised.

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:

3. I needed some extra equipment for safety, but when it broke I was told I had to pay for repairs. I cannot afford the repairs and do not see why I should pay high repairs just because it is deaf specialist equipment.

4. I have received no other information from AtW so I don’t know what else is available especially for my PTSD.

The effectiveness of AtW in supporting people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities:
5. I really want to know what is available for PTSD in work. My work is probably the biggest area affected by my PTSD.

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

6. Without AtW I would not be where I am today. My business is growing and I am starting to feel like a member of society.

The steps taken so far by DWP to extend AtW, including its marketing and funding of the scheme:

7. I know very little about AtW only through family. More can be done to make it accessible for Deaf and lower level English

My Recommendations:

8. Better access to AtW information for Deaf people
9. Continue flexible approach to communication needs when mental health issues on top
10. An easy person to contact for information and support especially if I am struggling
11. Information about what is there for mental health or people like me with dual (Deaf and mental health)
12. Improve reassessment procedures.

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