Written evidence submitted by Wayne McMillan (ATW0142)

This submission has been translated and transcribed from British Sign Language

Executive Summary:
The information on this form will show that Access to Work (AtW) provides essential support because it has enabled me to:

- Enter employment
- Remain in employment
- Build a reputation
- Support my family
- Build my self-esteem
- Keep me healthy mentally and physically

Because of this, I will explain why AtW should not be taken away from people who do not earn less than the minimum wage or do not currently pay National Insurance contributions.

Introduction:

My name is Wayne McMillan (I am 37 from Leicester and have been profoundly Deaf all my life) and I have been self-employed, running McMillan Tutoring which teaches sign language for the past six years. AtW ensured my business got up and running and played a vital role in enabling me to work and support my wife and son. My AtW has just been stopped and I believe it will be extremely hard to continue my job effectively.

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

(What is the AtW application and assessment process like for Deaf and disabled people, and for their employers? (This can be for the first time you apply, or when you are being re-assessed).

- I have been re-assessed today and my AtW has just been stopped. I felt I didn’t have an opportunity to explain why it is so important and why I need it.

- I haven’t found the re-assessment process to be sensitive to my needs at all.

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:

(Is AtW support for Deaf and disabled people good enough, and does it meet your needs? This is for both the help and advice they offer you and your employer, and the support they offer – interpreters, other support workers, aids and adaptations.)
AtW provides really good support because it simply allows access in the workplace. It supported me by providing an interpreter to do several things:

1) Interpret with clients 1:1 and in meetings
2) Cope in the university environment
3) Make vital phone calls in the university environment, (e.g. when I have been locked in the building and unable to communicate this myself or my classroom has been locked and only a phone call can locate the key)
4) Give me the confidence to teach good lessons because I have fully understood and accessed meetings etc.
5) Interpret vital phone calls
6) Provide access to written English for accounting and administration work
7) Provide communication between myself and security and IT and keep me safe.
8) Provide communication between myself and the examining board on assessment days.

Now changes in AtW rules means I am not entitled to an interpreter. I cannot now continue in employment effectively because I cannot have any of the above access.

The effectiveness of AtW in supporting people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities:

- AtW was very effective in supporting me when I have suffered from severe stress. When I feel stressed by a situation, I quickly become overwhelmed and the ability to communicate in my first language helps to calm me enormously.

- Prior to AtW, I was always stuck in the house and I become depressed when I don’t have the purpose my work gives me. AtW had a very positive effect on my marriage because the improvement in my self-esteem impacted home life.

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

- AtW has been extremely effective in securing my long term work. Prior to AtW approval, I was on benefits. Since my original application was approved, I secured a job and have stayed in employment.

- Because my AtW was enabling me to develop my business, I was confident that my longevity in the work place was leading to more contracts and I would have continued to obtain more work to be in the position to earn a lot more – over the minimum wage and enough to pay regular National
Insurance contributions. AtW provided the access for me to do this. I was looking at a new contract next year with an additional college but AtW would allow me to be able to take this on much more confidently.

**My Recommendations:**

- I recommend that AtW is not taken away from those who are earning less than the minimum wage because it is still encouraging employment and providing the opportunity for Deaf people to stay in employment, develop their career and enhance their self-esteem.

- I recommend that AtW is not taken away from those who are earning less than the minimum wage because it can secure new jobs in the future. For example, this year I have only worked part time as I also care for my 2 year old son at home, but if I could continue in my part time work and keep building my reputation, when my son has a funded nursery place next year, AtW would allow me to work more full time and I would then be able to pay National Insurance contributions, etc. I believe in the long term the money given out for AtW would be given back to the government and society would reap the benefits. I would not then need to go back to claiming benefits.

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