1. **Introduction**
The deaf charity SignHealth works to improve the health of deaf people. We do this directly through the services we provide (care homes, outreach, advocacy, counselling, etc.). We also raise awareness of health issues, and work with the NHS to improve deaf people’s health chances. A large proportion of our staff are Deaf, and this is important to the charity.

2. We welcome the review of Access to Work arrangements. We feel AtW is an important mechanism for reducing barriers to employment. AtW is not only important in terms of getting Deaf people into work, but also means that working life can be more fulfilling and rewarding. We know many Deaf people feel isolated and depressed in workplaces where appropriate adjustments are not in place (*Reaching Deaf Minds in the Workplace*, SignHealth). The UKCoD submission is comprehensive so we only add the following.

3. **Assessment**
There appears to be too much inconsistency in assessments. We may have a number of Deaf people working in the same team, with similar roles, but they have different assessments. It can be hard to understand why these differences exist.

4. **Advisers**
The support from advisers varies. We often find (as an employer) that the advisers are not very accessible and do not communicate well. This sometimes adds to the mystery surrounding assessments.

5. **Amount of support time**
Any further reductions in the amount of support time would have serious implication for some of our staff. Reductions in the funding would have a similar effect.

6. **Flexibility**
We are finding that the flexibility of our Deaf staff is being reduced because of AtW decisions. In some cases this has led to long-standing interpreters refusing to continue. This is a double blow as these interpreters have built up considerable knowledge and have a good working relationship with the member of staff and their colleagues.

7. **Employers being made to fund**
Although this may fall outside of the scope of your review, we would like to make it clear that we would strongly object to any moves which saw employers being given a financial burden for employing Deaf staff. For some large organisations, with few Deaf staff, this may not be a problem for the organisation (although there would be all kinds of difficulties for individual Deaf people). But, for an organisation such as ours with a high proportion of Deaf staff, the burden would be colossal. As a charity we would have to pass this cost on, which would mean either a decrease in the quality of our service or purchasers (local authorities and health trusts) having to pay more. This would shunt the cost around the system, with Deaf people losing out in the process. This seems to make little sense.

*20 June 2014*