

THE DEAF HEALTH CHARITY SIGNHEALTH



PRESS RELEASE 16 April 2020

On Demand Remote BSL Interpreting Service www.BSLHealthAccess.co.uk Launches For UK's Deaf Community

The Deaf Health Charity, SignHealth and online interpreting company InterpreterNow, have together launched 'BSLHealthAccess' which enables the provision of immediate, on demand access to British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for communication with Deaf people in health settings free of charge during the current Coronavirus situation.

More than 70,000 Deaf people across the UK use British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate as our first and preferred language, but we know from research that Deaf people's health is already much poorer than hearing people's. Deaf people often rely on asking family and friends to interpret for them but they can't do that with the current social distancing and stay at home policies.

When people wear PPE it makes communication and lip-reading impossible and Deaf people are being left frustrated and isolated. We need to be able to communicate with doctors and nurses now. As a result, SignHealth have teamed up with InterpreterNow to provide a solution, to fill the gaps in BSL interpreter provision in health settings and provide on demand BSL interpreting when it's really needed.

We are optimistic that NHS England and Improvement or another government body will pay for this service but in the meantime SignHealth has agreed to pay for the service so that it can begin immediately. Deaf people cannot wait.

James Watson-O'Neill, SignHealth Chief Executive, says: "I am proud that SignHealth has agreed to fund this service and look forward to it being funded by the public sector in due course. Deaf people must be able to access healthcare, whether to visit their GP, have a scan during pregnancy or be treated in intensive care for coronavirus. We should all be able to talk to our doctors and nurses, and for them to talk to us."

Andrew Dewey, Sign Language Interactions, says: "I am delighted that as the leading Video BSL Interpreting provider to the Health Care sector, InterpreterNow is able to provide access to a video

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Charity no. 1011056, registered in Scotland no. SC044122

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BSL/English interpreter, 24 hours a day, 7 days per week for the BSL community's Health Care needs. At a time when there is less access to face to face interpreting and with more healthcare services only being provided over the phone, the BSL community and health professionals can still use an interpreter by simply downloading the InterpreterNow App or by using a PC and clicking on the 'BSLHealthAccess' website"

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Notes to editors:

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SignHealth is the Deaf health charity led by Deaf people at all levels of the organisation. We are dedicated to making sure Deaf people get the same sort of access to healthcare and health information and we provide services to improve Deaf people's health and wellbeing.

We have media-trained Deaf people who use British Sign Language to communicate, as well as access to qualified BSL interpreters, ready to be interviewed to support this statement.

For more information about SignHealth, visit www.signhealth.org.uk and follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook at: [@SignHealth](https://www.instagram.com/SignHealth)

INTERPRETERNOW

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InterpreterNow is a service that enables deaf and hearing people to communicate with each-other. We deliver immediate access to online interpreting for deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users.

The service can be accessed through any laptop, PC/Mac or, Android or Apple tablet and smartphone via the InterpreterNow App.

InterpreterNow can be used in the workplace for face-to-face meetings, appointments, in shops or businesses and for telephone conversations – where deaf people can call a business or service and they can call them back.

All you need is a good Internet connection.

InterpreterNow is a social enterprise, dedicated to providing high quality services to improve the health and wellbeing of deaf people

For more information about InterpreterNow, visit <https://interpreternow.co.uk/> and follow us on Facebook & Instagram - @interpreternow and Twitter - @interpreter_Now

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