

DeafATW survey re ATW Changes and Communications - June 2020

In June DeafATW shared a survey with people on the DeafATW mailing list. We asked questions under three headings and had 40 responses:

- (1) What changes have AtW made to help with COVID-19 that have been good changes that have helped you?
- (2) How did you find out about these changes? How clear was AtW information about these changes? How can AtW communicate with you better about changes?
- (3) What else could AtW have done to meet your needs during COVID-19 and lockdown?

AtW call the changes that they make because of Coronavirus “easements”. In this summary we call them changes.

Summary of key themes identified from responses:

1. The changes, for those who knew about them, made a difference, though knowing about them earlier would have been better.
2. Almost no-one found out about the changes from AtW directly, people found out from a variety of other sources.
3. This means that even where respondents thought they knew about the changes, they often had gaps in their knowledge, knowing of some changes, but not others.
4. Advisers were not always aware of the changes, did not always seem open to customers explaining this, and did not seem to have an easy way of checking.
5. A number of people said that the information that they received from ATW about the changes, e.g. in response to email requests and in the updated factsheet, was not plain English, and was often not understood, even by people with fairly fluent English skills.
6. A number of people asked why there had been no communications or information in BSL at all during the whole pandemic and lockdown i.e. between early March and 21st June, the date of the survey. (NB: the BSL translation of the updated factsheet was released 24th June.)
7. Respondents reported a mixed experience with workplace assessments and renewals. Where there were delays in arranging these, the problem was exacerbated by lack of response to communications.
8. There was mixed experience on claims & payment processes, the experience being more negative in earlier months with significant financial impact for some customers and support workers.

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Suggestions for improvements with communications include:

9. Have direct timely updates with AtW customers, in plain English and BSL, in a clear '*what to do and how to do it*' format where applicable.
10. Employ a Deaf BSL user as member of staff who can support comms in BSL.

What changes to continue:

11. Continue with the changes that have been made, especially electronic submission and signature.
12. Use these changes to add impetus to the digitisation of claim forms, invoice processing, and payments.

Concerns / recommendations from respondents:

13. Many respondents did not know if they could ask for help during COVID-19, and therefore did not seek help that they needed.
14. Respondents were concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on their budget. These concerns were about whether and how the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown would be taken into account when reviewing their usage prior to renewal, especially for self-employed people and business owners who are subject to the Lower Earnings Level (LEL). (The LEL is a minimum income requirement).
15. Some respondents said that the LEL should be reduced for at least two years given the impact of Covid-19 on self-employed people and small businesses.