**Joint stakeholder response to DWP’s market review of British Sign Language and communications provision for people who are deaf or have hearing loss**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has published a report following their review of British Sign Language and communications provision for people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

The review was intended to determine the present state of the market that facilitates communication for people who are deaf, deafblind or have hearing loss, covering all forms of language and communication support, including British Sign Language Interpreting and speech-to-text reporters. The review also looked separately at the role of Communication Support Workers.

Looking at provision in the UK as a whole, the review focused on the supply and demand of language and communication support, the role of technology and identifying future developments. The DWP received over 200 submissions to the review’s call for evidence. The report represents a summary of the evidence submissions received and concludes the review.

As members of the steering group, we welcome the publication of the report, which brings together a wealth of information on the language and communications market. We are pleased that the report acknowledges that the failure to meet the communication needs of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss means that they cannot access essential public services. For example, the report states *‘BSL is the first language of 24,000 people, but there are only 908 registered sign language interpreters’* and the report gives numerous other examples of how deaf people face barriers to public services because of the absence of different types of communication support.

The review highlights a number of significant challenges, including a lack of comprehensive data about supply and demand, including unmet need, across the market as a whole. There are therefore limitations to the report, and we are in clear agreement that more research is needed. The review also illustrates that there is widespread variation in the provision of adequate support and demonstrates the negative impact that this can have on the day- to-day lives of deaf people and people with hearing loss.

We urge DWP to consider how it will act on the key findings of the review and consider how government and other stakeholders can work together to address some of the significant challenges highlighted in the review.

Our organisations will continue to work, both individually and collectively, to address the issues identified through the review and to ensure the report is used as a catalyst for essential change which improves the lives of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss.

This is a joint response from the following members of the review steering group:

*Action on Hearing Loss, Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI), National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) and National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI).*

*The review report is available here:* <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630960/government-response-market-review-of-bsl-and-communications-provision-for-people-who-are-deaf-or-have-hearing-loss.pdf>