

28 MAY 2012
BY: _____

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24th May 2012

Steve Powell
Chief Executive
SignHealth
5 Baring Road
Beaconsfield
Buckinghamshire
HP9 2NB

Dear Mr Powell,

We are writing in response to your open letter on relay services because there appear to be considerable misunderstandings that we would very much like to correct.

Since the Communications Minister's roundtable sessions, reviewing communications accessibility for hearing and speech impaired people last year, our key area of focus has been on Ofcom's formal review of relay services. All the major communications providers are fully engaged with this process and we await Ofcom's imminent statement on next steps.

We believe that wherever possible people should be able to communicate without the need for a relay operator particularly with businesses largely relying on call centres for customer contact and where calls concern confidential and personal information. Business textphones and LiveChat are examples of ways to facilitate this and the most commonly available. We therefore wrote to the Communications Minister on 1st November 2011 suggesting further discussion, broadening the scope of attendees to the CBI, Chambers of Commerce and other business organisations, but we have not yet received a reply. Without this direct engagement and ownership by banks, government departments, doctors and so on, it is likely that many of the communication difficulties experienced today by users of the text relay service will continue unresolved, reducing the benefit that improved technological solutions can offer to end-users. A next generation text relay platform has the potential to support direct communication between businesses and their customers so it is vitally important that businesses accept their responsibility for enabling customers to contact them in a way of their choosing. For your information, we attach a copy of the letter.

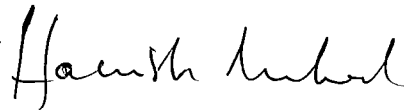
We would also be happy to provide information to help your respective organisations raise awareness amongst people with hearing and speech impairments about the very positive communications developments made in recent years, which appear very under-represented on your various web sites.

We trust that this letter clears up any confusion and reiterate that we will remain fully prepared to engage with all stakeholders. For information, we have copied this letter to Ed Vaizey. We will also request a reply to our last letter to the Minister and his agreement to a further roundtable on the wider communications accessibility difficulties experienced by hearing and speech impaired people.

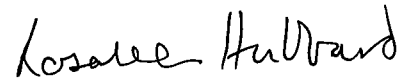
Yours sincerely,



Warren Buckley



Hamish MacLeod



Rosaleen Hubbard



Copy to Ed Vaizey MP
Copy to Alan Pridmore – Ofcom
Copy to Claudio Pollack - Ofcom