

Hello,

My name is Donna Williams and I am a deaf BSL user based near Bristol. Over the last few years, I have had to call 999 on three occasions, twice for my mother and once for my father, both elderly. On all occasions, I used text relay / TypeTalk. I think introducing a service where BSL can be used to call 999 is a great idea and dare I say, somewhat overdue.

The benefits are many. While I am fluent in English and can type fast, I had to move away from my parent to use the minicom / textphone and questions that were asked to me about the patient had to wait until I went over to them, asked them, got the answer and came back to the phone. Being able to sit next to them and answer questions immediately in BSL would save time, crucial in an emergency.

All of these incidents happened at home but I can easily imagine that out and about, one doesn't always have the opportunity to text in the middle of an emergency. Being able to simply take out the phone and make a video call while dealing with whatever is going on would be more convenient and potentially safer for me in that scenario.

I know many deaf people whose first language is BSL and are not fluent in English and this service would benefit them, indeed all of us, greatly. It would give us far more equality and agency in an emergency situation where otherwise we may have to ask someone to call for us or ask them to wait while we text and wait for answers.

In summary, I wholeheartedly support setting up a BSL service to call 999.

Warm regards,

Donna