

NEWS RELEASE

TAG calls for Government action after independent Ofcom report on deaf telecoms

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TAG is calling for Government action to improve deaf telecoms services following a new report from Ofcom that highlights the benefits that modernised telephone relay services could have on the employment and everyday lives of deaf people. The independent report, *Voice telephony services for deaf people*, was commissioned by Ofcom as part of its work to tackle the most critical issues that disabled people face with communications services.

The report says that modernised relay services – in use in several other countries, but available to only a very few people in the UK – could enable deaf people to be significantly more productive at work, help reduce their feelings of isolation and loneliness at home and make everyday telephone interactions less stressful and much faster.

Ruth Myers, chairman of TAG said “We are very pleased that this independent report for Ofcom has highlighted the all-round benefits of modernised relay services to deaf people and that they may even be more cost-effective than the existing basic text relay service. We now want the government to act promptly to ensure that modernised services can be available to deaf people at fair prices.

“The report echoes what TAG has been saying for a very long time: that the existing basic text relay service is very frustrating for its deaf users principally because it is too slow and does not allow natural fluid conversations. As the report indicates, the newer captioned and video relay services enable much faster, less stressful and far more effective means for deaf people to contact hearing people by voice telephone.”

The continuing importance of voice telephone calls for the general population despite the growth in other forms of text communication like SMS texting, email and instant messaging is also highlighted by the report. Although voice calls by the hearing population have decreased a little in recent years, they have now stabilised at an average 90 minutes per week. Deaf people are therefore largely missing out on a vital mode of communication, an issue that could be addressed through the widespread availability of modernised relay services.

TAG is gaining support for its campaign from MPS of all the main political parties, many of whom are raising the issue in Parliament.

The Ofcom report on deaf telecoms is available at <http://tiny.cc/fntjS>

TAG is a consortium made up of the British Deaf Association, Deafness Support Network, deafPLUS, Hearing Concern Link, National Association of Deafened People, National Deaf Children’s Society, Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID), and Sense.

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