



Lord Agnew Kt DL
Minister of State
HM Treasury and Cabinet Office
1 Horse Guards Road London SW1A 2HQ

Ms Rebecca Hilsenrath
Chief Executive
Equality and Human Rights Commission
Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square
London, EC4Y 8JX

Our reference: MC2020/06744

By email:
Rebecca.Hilsenrath@equalityhumanrights.com

23 June 2020

Dear Ms Hilsenrath,

Thank you for your letter of 30 April regarding the provision of a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter at the Government's coronavirus press briefings. Your letter was addressed to the Prime Minister, and has been passed to the Cabinet Office for me to respond. I am sorry not to have been able to get to you sooner.

In accordance with Public Health England (PHE) guidelines, we cannot safely include a physical BSL interpreter in the room as this would require additional cameras and operators to be present. We established BSL interpretation at the No.10 press conference via the BBC News channel and iPlayer, available on all TV packages as part of Freeview, and worked to ensure greater replication of this signed interpretation across a wider range of media channels. On 21 May the BBC made their BSL interpretation video feed available to all broadcasters and to No.10, for use on our social channels.

ITV's bespoke Sign Language studio, SignPost, is also offering content for the deaf community online, with a daily online news bulletin produced remotely from presenters' houses. This has a BSL interpreter covering all of the latest news regarding coronavirus.

All UK broadcasters are independent of government and therefore are responsible for their own signing resources. It is for Ofcom, as the independent broadcast regulator, to enforce statutory targets regarding the amount of signing that eligible broadcasters - including BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 - have to provide, and to monitor how broadcasters are meeting their signing targets, including taking into account the current circumstances.

I hope this reply is helpful, and that you are well during these challenging and unprecedented times.

Personal Data

Lord Agnew Kt DL