

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd April 2021

Dear Consultant,

RE: BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the British Sign Language (BSL) Health Access service; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

First, let me say I have warmly welcomed this service during the past year as a vital support network while primary health settings in particular have shifted towards digital and remote consultations.

The Government is committed to a truly world-class health service that must be equally available to all; people must be able to communicate their needs and access the information, advice and support that they need to complement the hands-on work of health professionals. Some people may need additional support, or to be supported in a different way. We must therefore take proactive steps to provide support for reasonable adjustments.

Existing equality legislation means that employers, service providers and public bodies must provide services in BSL when it is reasonable for them to do so. That was underpinned by the *Equality Act 2010*, which places a duty on all public bodies to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people are not put at a disadvantage compared with those who live without a disability. Commissioners of NHS services must pay due regard to the needs of their population, including those living with a disability, when planning and commissioning services. I know that NHS 111 has a BSL service which can be found, here: <https://interpreternow.co.uk/nhs111>.

Rest assured, I know that the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, the Rt. Hon Matt Hancock MP, firmly supports the use of technology to improve access, and I will be sure to mention your concerns to him and continue to monitor this area closely.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,
Tom

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE