



Julia Lopez MP
Parliamentary Secretary
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS

To: All MPs

15 March 2020

Dear Colleague,

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Ensuring the public has the information they need to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic is a priority for Government. This includes the approximately 80,000 deaf people for whom BSL is the first, preferred or only language.

In recent weeks several Members of Parliament have asked specifically about our provision to communicate with the deaf community and I committed to provide an accessible social media asset to help them signpost constituents to where they can most easily access the live Coronavirus Press Conferences with the British Sign Language (BSL).

For the live Coronavirus Press Conferences, a BSL interpreter is available on the BBC News Channel, with captions on BBC One which signpost viewers requiring BSL to switch to the BBC News channel (available to all homes on Freeview, as well as cable, satellite or live on iPlayer). If using iPlayer to watch after the event, users can find a link to the signed version below the video. BSL interpretation is also provided on the 10 Downing Street and UK Government social media channels, and made freely available to key broadcasters and other media outlets should they wish to make use of it.

The Government Communications Service holds a monthly Disability Stakeholder Steering Group continuously to evaluate and improve the accessibility of our comms. This includes representatives from the Disability Charities Consortium, including: Disability Rights UK, Scope, RNIB, Action on Hearing Loss, Sense, and Mencap.

This steering group has directly resulted in the production of a series of informative BSL video content including on tierings, mask exemptions, national restrictions, lockdowns, vaccine roll out and the recent roadmap. The content is published on UK Government social media and also made available via the Campaigns Resource Centre for stakeholders to download and share on their own social media channels.

To help Members of Parliament inform their constituents of future Coronavirus Press Briefings with live BSL, a short BSL video asset has been produced for sharing online and on social media. This is attached in this correspondence.

For extra accessibility, I would encourage MPs to include in the body of their social media posts similar text to that featured in the video. Please see a sample post below:

Today's Coronavirus Press Conferences covers vaccine rollout. Live at 7pm and available with British Sign Language on the Number 10 YouTube Channel and the BBC News Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Number10gov>



More context, such as the date, timings, subject matter and link to the official Number 10 Downing Street YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/Number10gov) can also be added.

We will continue to listen to disability stakeholders and communities to improve communications during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. If you have any further queries or ideas in this regard, please get in touch with Peter Heneghan, who has been appointed our Accessible Communications Champion (peter.heneghan@cabinetoffice.gov.uk).

With best wishes,

Julia Lopez MP