



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Colin Beattie MSP
Convener
Cross-party Group on Deafness

14 January 2025

Dear Colin

Provision of Contact Scotland BSL from March 2025

Thank you for your letter of 13 December 2024 on behalf of the Cross-party Group on Deafness, in which you set out the group's concerns about what it understands to be the Scottish Government's decision to terminate the contract for Contact Scotland BSL with effect from 31 March 2025, with no intention to retender service provision.

The Committee recognises the group's observation that Contact Scotland BSL is essential to the day-to-day lives of Deaf and Deafblind people and their families, enabling independent access to civic society through its provision of Video Relay Services, Braille displays and speech synthesizers.

Your letter also highlighted the group's concerns about the lack of transparency and consultation with Deaf and Deafblind people before the Scottish Government took this decision.

We note that, subsequent to your letter, this matter was raised directly with the First Minister by Mark Griffin MSP during First Minister's Questions on [Thursday 19 December 2024](#).

We note that, in response to Mr Griffin's question, the First Minister was "clear that there will be no break in service for users of Contact Scotland BSL while [the Scottish Government] retender for the free service" and stated that the Scottish Government would work closely with BSL users and the current supplier to ensure that the service is designed to best meets the needs of those who use it.

In response to a follow-up question from Stephen Kerr MSP, who quoted directly from the letter issued by the Scottish Government that "the Scottish Government will not be retendering a BSL Video Relay service", the First Minister again gave a firm commitment that there will be no break in the service while the Scottish Government retenders for the free service.

While this appears to give some reassurance the Committee acknowledges that a degree of uncertainty or lack of clarity remains. We will closely monitor developments on this matter. Should you or the group become aware of any such

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Email EHRCJ.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

developments, or should your concerns remain, please do not hesitate to contact our clerks in order that they can update the Committee accordingly and we can consider any relevant next steps.

Yours sincerely

Karen Adam MSP
Convener