

SignVideo Case Study

Name: Kerry Bromley
Age: 50
Family: Married with two children (20 & 17)
Job: Senior electrical designer, Foster Wheeler
City: Reading

(1) My job:

Unfortunately I'm facing redundancy, along with around 600 other workers at Foster and Wheeler (Reading based engineering and construction company). I'm busy looking for other work but there's just not much around.

(2) What happens when you lose your job?

I'm really worried about getting another job. It's tough enough but people aren't aware of deaf people's issues, especially with communication.

Through the 'Access to Work' program, I get free access to SignVideo but when I get laid off the funding will be stopped. I can't afford it by myself so it's going to make getting a job a lot harder.

I'm lucky that I've got reasonable speech, so I can communicate face to face, but it's much easier using SignVideo or an interpreter. The problem with using an interpreter is that if I got a last minute offer of an interview, it's unlikely one will be available. You can't tell a potential employer to wait for a fortnight until I can get hold of an interpreter.

(3) How did you use the service?

Before I started using SignVideo, I felt ignored - no-one understood me at work. I felt totally disempowered. I had used interpreters before but it wasn't practical as you couldn't book them for last minute sort of meetings.

It's wonderful, a definite help to me as well as being good for the company. I found it very useful at meetings and presentations where I could really join in and contribute to things. I definitely learnt more and was able to give more back to the company.

There were a few technical problem to begin with, firewalls, that sort of thing. But when they were sorted it out it worked smoothly. The system works easily enough. I get a monthly bill, pass it onto the accounts department who sort it out.

(4) How easy is it for deaf people to get a job?

Employers don't deliberately discriminate against you. It's more a case of ignorance and being put into the 'too hard to employ basket'. They don't really know anything about deafness - they don't know what you need or how to help you. They don't really understand that with just a little bit of support, you can contribute as well as any other worker.

Job Centres are useless. They do absolutely nothing for us. My wife was looking for a job for two years and they did nothing, absolutely nothing, for her.

(5) Why should SignVideo be subsidised?

It's not a waste of money. The taxpayers' money spent to give me access to SignVideo is a lot less than what would be spent on me if I didn't have a job. If I don't have access to it, it's going to be a lot harder for me to work. I don't want to sit on my backside - I want to work and use my brain.

Hearing people just don't realise how much help the service gives us. I just wish it was given a higher level of support.