

SignVideo Case Study

Name: Kristy Cooper
Age: 40
Family: Mother of two girls (8 and 6)
Job: Acting Deaf Peer Support Project Manager
City: Lives in Totnes and works in Exeter

(1) My job:

My job involves going out into the community in Devon and giving deaf people with sign language skills practical support and advice in areas such as health, employment, dentistry and mental health. I live and work in a rural area, so it can be difficult to reach out and provide services that deaf people need.

(2) Life without SignVideo:

It's difficult for hearing people to realise just how hard everyday activities are for deaf people. Probably the most common problem is just making a phone call – unless you have a qualified BSL – English interpreter with you, it's impossible to do things like query a gas bill or talk to the bank. Another option is text messages, but it's slow and not a great way to communicate.

40% of deaf people suffer from mental health problems, primarily because of the extreme difficulties they have in communicating with the hearing public.

While you can often use sign language interpreters, the reality is you often have to book them a week or two in advance. That's OK for things like going to the hospital where the appointment is made in advance - but before SignVideo, there was nothing to help in the instant, everyday sort of conversations everyone has.

I used to have to spend a large part of my working life working out, in advance, the meetings I'd have to attend – and then try to book an interpreter. But this wasn't any good if there was a last minute meeting I'd have to attend.

(3) Using SignVideo at work:

Like most people, my job involves a lot of unplanned phone calls and meetings, which for a deaf person is obviously a challenge. Sometimes I had support workers and translators to help but it's too expensive to have them available full time. My written English isn't great so I wasn't that comfortable using text phones in a professional environment.

But now I can use SignVideo, all that's changed. If I have to make a quick call, it's easy to use and it lets me do my job quicker and a lot more efficiently. It's made a huge difference to the way I work.

Our deaf clients also love the service. If they're sitting down next to me, taking part in a conversation using SignVideo, it's a real learning curve for them. They get a chance to participate in the conversation – they're more empowered by being actively involved in the process.

It's now become a central part of my working life – through the 'Access to Work' scheme, I get to use the service for three hours a week. As I'm getting more aware about how useful the service is, ideally I'd like to be able to increase my hours.

(4) Why should SignVideo be subsidised?

Like many deaf people, I'm a tax payer and some of my money needs to go into supporting things like this. I'd like the money to be put into a central fund and not at the mercy of government spending review.

At the moment a lot of deaf people have mental health problems because they're barred from being able to communicate. A simple thing like the chance to communicate with the world is a

right that everyone should have. It allows us to build up our lives, to be more comfortable and to contribute in all areas of our lives.