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16 November 2012

Ester McVey MP  
Minister for Disabled People  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
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Dear Ms McVey

I am writing as Chair of the UK Council on Deafness to reinforce the concerns raised by Liz Sayce in her letter of 6th November 2012 about declining Access to Work take up. We all share the Government's ambition to see more disabled people in mainstream work, contributing as taxpayers and with a reduced dependence on the benefit system.

There is a strong international evidence base showing that given the right communication support hearing impaired, including profoundly deaf people can be successful in education and in employment as their hearing counterparts. The support available through Access to Work is vital to the ability of hearing impaired people to work and to progress through work. It should also offer a vital lifeline to obtain work, and we share Liz Sayce's concern the such support should be there for people undertaking apprenticeships, internships and work experience.

Of course support needs to be delivered in a cost effective way and employers should meet their obligations to support disabled employees. But we should not impair the employment and career chances of hearing impaired people through over-complicating the assessment of need or seeking to limit the cost of necessary communication support. The changes to Remploy were recognised by your predecessor and by many in the disability community as providing a unique opportunity to enhance Access to Work, extending this vital scheme's reach, and support more disabled people, more effectively. I hope the alarming recent dip in take up will prove temporary and you will champion measures to ensure we see a growing Access to Work budget benefitting more disabled people more effectively, to tackle employment and lifetime disadvantage and to move people from dependence to independence.

The panel set up by Maria Miller under Mike Adams lacks direct involvement of hearing impaired and deaf people and I am copying this letter to him so he is fully aware of our concerns and to suggest the UK Council on Deafness provides a direct input to the work of Mike's group.

Yours sincerely

*Jim Edwards*

Chair  
UK Council on Deafness

cc: Mr M Adams  
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