

contactSCOTLAND: Review of the service extension pilot



HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

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Executive Summary¹

Background

ContactSCOTLAND is a pilot online British Sign Language (BSL) video relay interpreting service. It aims to connect Deaf BSL users to Scotland's public authorities through the use of BSL/English interpreters. It was first introduced in April 2012 as an NHS 24 service to enable better access to telephone health services for Deaf BSL users. An initial review² found that uptake had been low but that stakeholders agreed that the service should continue in a revised form. An extended version of the service funded by Scottish Government and covering all Scottish public services was launched by the Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health on 2 March 2015.

The aim of the contactSCOTLAND pilot is to provide a BSL online video relay interpreting service which is high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to user needs. The specific objectives are to:

- Extend the NHS 24 BSL interpreting service pilot to allow users to access a wider range of public services/agencies.
- Measure and evaluate the extended service and make recommendations on its future.
- Engage with BSL users to ensure that the service is fit for purpose, cost effective and to encourage uptake of the service.

Aim and approach of the review

In order to support these objectives Scottish Government Health Analytical Services worked with the Deaf Sector Partnership³ to review the pilot service. The purpose of the review was understand uptake and usage of the extended pilot and gather information on stakeholders' views and experiences of the contactSCOTLAND service. This report presents the findings of the review and is based primarily on management information about the service and feedback from a range of stakeholders.

Main findings

The review indicated that as part of a range of interpreting options, contactSCOTLAND offers a valuable service to the Deaf community. Those who have used the service have been able to access a range of public services and in doing so have benefited from increased independence, empowerment and choice.

¹ A link to the BSL version of this executive summary is available on the Scottish Government website.

² NHS 24 BSL Pilot Project: Preliminary Evaluation Report. September 2013 (unpublished).

³ The Deaf Sector Partnership is formed by: the Scottish Government Equality Unit; the Voluntary Action Fund; British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland; Deaf Action; Deafblind Scotland; Deaf Connections; and the Scottish Council on Deafness.

Overall, those who had used the service were positive about the ease of use and were satisfied with the service. However, it's clear that improvements could be made, particularly around the quality and reliability of the technology as users have experienced problems⁴. The review also found that awareness and understanding of the service could be improved.

The experience of those who had used the service was mainly positive, with users and other stakeholders suggesting that it offered a means for BSL users to increase their access to services. The various ways in which users felt that the service could be improved related to user guidance, the interpreting service, and the service remit. The need for the quality and reliability of the technology to be improved and sustained was stressed by many review participants. Improvements related to the interpreting service were mainly about having a choice of interpreter and improving the queuing system. The provision of awareness raising and training and additional guidance in BSL were suggested. There were a range of suggestions for extending the service including the operating hours and the range of organisations that can be contacted. There was limited feedback from non-users, but it was suggested that more information about the service and more user friendly technology could increase use of the service.

Recommendations for on-going service improvement

The extended contactSCOTLAND service is currently being piloted with the intention to move to full implementation in Autumn 2016. Based on the information available for this review, the following recommendations have been put forward for the development of the service and to help inform the development of a new service specification:

- There is an on-going need for awareness raising and outreach work to increase the use and understanding of contactSCOTLAND and its remit alongside other interpreting options.
- The survey responses suggest a number of potential avenues for doing this including the provision of additional BSL guidance on how to use the service and increased promotional activity from public services and Deaf networks. This may require initial work with these organisations on the role and purpose of contactSCOTLAND.
- In order to overcome some of the challenges in seeking feedback on the service, the development of forums for on-going feedback could be considered whether through an online user group or online comments or other appropriate options.
- The quality and reliability of the technology were recurring themes, suggesting a need for this to be kept under review and to ensure that adequate technical support and guidance is available.
- Consideration should be given to the options for extending the access to additional services.

⁴ It is not possible to tell from the feedback provided to what extent problems with the technology arise from technical issues on the user or supplier side.

- There is currently a limited range of systematic management information on the service. A wider range of information on levels of regular and unique users, where calls are being directed and user feedback would enable more in-depth on-going service monitoring and evaluation.

1. Introduction

ContactSCOTLAND BSL is a pilot online British Sign Language (BSL) video relay interpreting service. It aims to connect Deaf BSL users to Scotland's public authorities through the use of BSL/English interpreters. It is a free service whereby a BSL/English interpreter will relay a call between an individual BSL user and public authority staff. It was first introduced in April 2012 as an NHS 24 service to enable better access to telephone health services for Deaf BSL users. An initial review⁵ found that uptake had been low but that stakeholders agreed that the service should continue in a revised form. An extended version of the service covering all Scottish public services was launched on 2 March 2015.

The aim of the contactSCOTLAND pilot is to provide a BSL online video relay interpreting service which is high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to user needs. The specific objectives are to:

- Extend the NHS 24 BSL interpreting service pilot to allow users to access a wider range of public services/agencies.
- Measure and evaluate the extended service and make recommendations on its future.
- Engage with BSL users to ensure that the service is fit for purpose, cost effective and to encourage uptake of the service.

In order to support these objectives Scottish Government Health Analytical Services worked with the Deaf Sector Partnership⁶ to review the pilot service. The purpose of the review was to understand uptake and usage of the extended pilot and gather information on stakeholders' views and experiences of the contactSCOTLAND service. This report presents the findings of the review. The methods used are summarised in Chapter 2 and the evaluation framework used to design the review is provided at Annex 2. Following a discussion of the policy, legislative and international context, the findings from the review are discussed. The findings relate to awareness and use of contactSCOTLAND; experiences of using contactSCOTLAND and reasons for not using it; and what works and what could be improved about the service. Recommendations are provided at the end of the report.

1.1 Policy context

Deaf people can face a range of challenges in accessing public services, such as a lack of information in BSL, and a lack of awareness and understanding of the needs of BSL users. Prior to the passage of the BSL (Scotland) 2015 Act, BSL was principally legislated for under equalities and disability discrimination laws. The NHS 24 BSL pilot developed from the NHS 2008 Annual Review which established a requirement to provide better access to telephone health services for users who

⁵ NHS 24 BSL Pilot Project: Preliminary Evaluation Report. September 2013 (unpublished).

⁶ The Deaf Sector Partnership is formed by: the Scottish Government Equality Unit; the Voluntary Action Fund; British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland; Deaf Action; Deafblind Scotland; Deaf Connections; and the Scottish Council on Deafness.

are Deaf. Operational from April 2012, the initial uptake of the service was low and a preliminary evaluation was undertaken to determine the possible reasons.

The NHS 24 evaluation used a mix of interviews, questionnaires, meetings and other feedback to gather views of three major stakeholder groups: Deaf communities, interpreters and NHS boards. Within the time constraints of the evaluation the focus was primarily on the Deaf community and interpreters, and less so on medical professionals. The key themes that emerged from the evaluation related to: the need for improved communication and community outreach; a need for more information in BSL; the importance of maintaining choice (of interpreting format and of interpreter) particularly for older people; and a need for more user friendly technology. The consensus view from participants was that the service should continue but not in its current form. An extended pilot service known as contactSCOTLAND was developed from the NHS 24 pilot, and made available for all Scottish public services. The intention was to make the service more cost effective, more widely accessible to users, and to allow for preparatory work on a sustainable service.

The contactSCOTLAND service supports public authorities in meeting their equalities duties under the 2010 Act by making reasonable adjustments to a service to address a potential discrimination as a result of disability. The British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 17 September 2015. The main provision of the Bill is to promote the use and understanding of BSL and enable Deaf people who use BSL to enjoy greater participation in daily and public life. Listed authorities are required to prepare and publish plans regarding the use of BSL in the delivery of their functions. It is anticipated that contactSCOTLAND will support public authorities to meet their legislative requirements.

1.2 International context

BSL video relay translation services also exist in a range of other countries, although the nature of the provision and remit of the service varies as do the funding arrangements. A comprehensive review of the deployment of video relay services was undertaken on behalf of Ofcom in 2012⁷, which reviewed provision in eight countries. At this time permanent services were in place in Germany, the USA, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. The similarities and differences in these are summarised in Table 1.

⁷ CSMG (2012), International Deployments of Video Relay Services.
<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/telecoms-research/video-relay-services-2012.pdf>

Table 1: High level comparison of VRS provision

Country	VR status	VR funding source	Cost to user	Number of VR providers
Australia	Voluntary trial run by current relay provider	Mixed funding from telecom providers and government	x	Single
Denmark	Permanent for business use; national trial for personal use ended in Sep 2012	Government	x	Multiple
France	Commercial services; trial for personal user	Employees fund service for business; government funded trial.	x	Multiple
Germany	Permanent	Mixed funding from telecoms providers, government and users	✓	Single
New Zealand	Permanent	Government	x	Single
Norway	Permanent	Government	x	Single
Sweden	Permanent	Government	x	Single
United States	Permanent	Telecoms providers which apply a levy on all customers	x	Multiple

Source: International Deployments of Video Relay Services (CSMG 2012)

In most cases these services are mandated through disability legislation, and have a mix of capped and uncapped funding. The demand and take up rates for these services have varied – in Norway for example the number of VR calls increased rapidly year on year, in the US there was a rapid increase for the first 10 years which has levelled off. The cost and availability of technology and awareness all influence the take up of services. The Ofcom report suggests that marketing and

outreach activities can have a major positive impact on VR adoption by improving awareness. Work undertaken in the UK has estimated that it can take up to seven years for the full adoption of a video relay service⁸.

There is also a range of international evidence⁹ available that indicates some of the benefits and challenges associated with the provision of Video Relay and Video Remote Interpreting Services (VRS/VRI) for users and service providers. Studies of user's experiences in the USA and in Canada indicate that there is a demand for VRS/VRI services and that they are positively viewed by Deaf users. There were some concerns about privacy and the adjustments required for the process of using video. There were features of the interpreting process that were commonly highly regarded by users: good interpreting skills; good interpersonal skills; confidentiality; appreciation of culture and diversity and responsiveness. VRS can also present particular challenges for interpreters due to the spontaneous nature of the calls and the potentially wide range of topics which can arise. Call handling training and support are important for online interpreters. Professional standards are still developing in what is a relatively new and emerging field. A European Telecommunications Standards Institute report¹⁰ has suggested a range of potential economic and social reasons for the provision of relay services. These reflect the potential for better integration of deaf people into society; improving access to services; increasing the efficiency of interpreter services; and promoting equality.

⁸ Cassiopeia Consultancy (2013) Impact assessment: telephone equivalency for d/Deaf people for UKCoD and Deaf access to communication group. Need, demand and cost of relay services for d/Deaf people in the UK.

⁹ Russell, D., & Demko, R. (2013). Reducing the Social Isolation of Rural Deaf Albertans. Available: <http://www.ardn.ca/documents/ARDN-016%20-Final%20Report%20to%20HS.pdf>; NCIEC (2008). Steps toward identifying effective practices in VRS interpreting. Report from The Interpreting via Video Work Team. Available: http://www.nciec.org/projects/docs/Steps_VRS_2008Report.pdf; Pilling, D., Fleming, S., Pechey, B., Barrett, M. (2006).; OFCOM: Feasibility of Additional Telephone Relay Services. Final Report. City University. <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/telecoms---research/relayreport.pdf>

¹⁰ ETSI TR 102 974 V1.1.1 (2009---09). *Technical Report. Human Factors (HF); Telecommunications relay services*. Available: http://www.etsi.org/deliver/etsi_tr/102900_102999/102974/01.01.01_60/tr_102974v010101p.pdf
European Parliament

2. Methodology

The review of contactSCOTLAND covers the period from the expansion of the service across the public sector on 2 March 2015 to end October 2015. The scope of the review was to gather information on awareness and uptake of the service, and experiences of using it, based on a combination of management information and stakeholder feedback. The work was undertaken jointly by the Scottish Government and the Deaf Sector Partnership (DSP), with the DSP undertaking the stakeholder engagement work and designing the approach.

The review provides high level insights and experiences from a range of stakeholders. The original intention was to use a combination of surveys and focus groups to provide both high level and in-depth insights. However, due to challenges in recruiting and facilitating focus groups, (the timing of the work following soon after the consultation work on the BSL Scotland Bill and resource challenges for the DSP in coordinating and delivering focus groups) it was not possible to capture more in-depth views. Nevertheless, the review still provides some important insights into the nature, awareness, scope and impact of the service from the perspective of those using the service as well as those with little experience of the service. The methods used are summarised in the Table 2 below, with full details provided in Annex 2.

2.1 Summary of methods

Table 2: Summary of review methods

Method	Scope	Purpose
Stakeholder Consultation	4 online surveys (Deaf/deafblind community (56 responses), public services (26 responses), interpreters (36 responses), Deaf organisations (14 responses) Fourteen face-to-face meetings incorporating questions on contactSCOTLAND	To gather views and information on awareness and use of contactSCOTLAND, experiences of using it and what works well and what could be improved.
Management Information	Monthly call reports and additional service information recorded by interpreters	To understand service uptake and usage and how this has developed over the implementation of the pilot.
Contextual evidence	Key reports on the policy and international context for VRS/VRI services	To understand the policy context for the contactSCOTLAND service.

3. Awareness and use of contactSCOTLAND

The surveys included questions on people's awareness and understanding of the contactSCOTLAND service. Although most people who responded to each of surveys were already aware of the service (and were therefore perhaps more likely to respond to the survey), there were indications that further work is needed to raise awareness of the service and encourage uptake.

Key points:

- People receive information about contactSCOTLAND from a range of sources, with the website generally considered to be the most useful.
- It is possible that there is some use of commercial services to make calls that would be free via contactSCOTLAND, which suggests an on-going need to promote the service and undertake community engagement.
- There was evidence of a range of awareness raising activities by public services and Deaf organisations, although there is scope for this to be expanded further.
- There has been a sustained uptake in the service since implementation in March 2015 with the potential for further growth as awareness increases.
- More information about the service and more user friendly technology could encourage more use.

Awareness and use of contactSCOTLAND

Only 11 people responding to the Deaf community survey were not already aware of contactSCOTLAND. Over half of these were in the 50+ age group. Most of the 14 people who responded to the question felt that they were fully aware of what the contactSCOTLAND service is.

Similarly nearly all of those responding to the public sector survey were already aware of contactSCOTLAND. Most of the organisations who responded to the question (11 out of 18) stated that they are fully aware of the service provided by contactSCOTLAND. Six organisations felt that they had some awareness of the service and one had heard of it but was not really sure what it provides. Twelve out of 14 respondents to the Deaf organisations survey were aware of contactSCOTLAND. Nearly all of those responding (ten out of 14) felt that they had a full understanding of the service offered by contactSCOTLAND. Thirty-one of those responding to the interpreter survey were already aware of contactSCOTLAND.

The ways in which people had first heard about contactSCOTLAND varied depending on whether it was in a professional or personal capacity. Of the individual respondents who had previously heard of contactSCOTLAND the most common sources of information were the BSL (Scotland) Bill Facebook site (six), friends or family (five) or Deaf organisations (five). Other sources mentioned were colleagues, and specific Deaf sector organisations. However, the most useful source of information was considered to be the contactSCOTLAND website (ten).

Other useful sources mentioned were colleagues, specific Deaf organisations and events, a Facebook video link and other Deaf people.

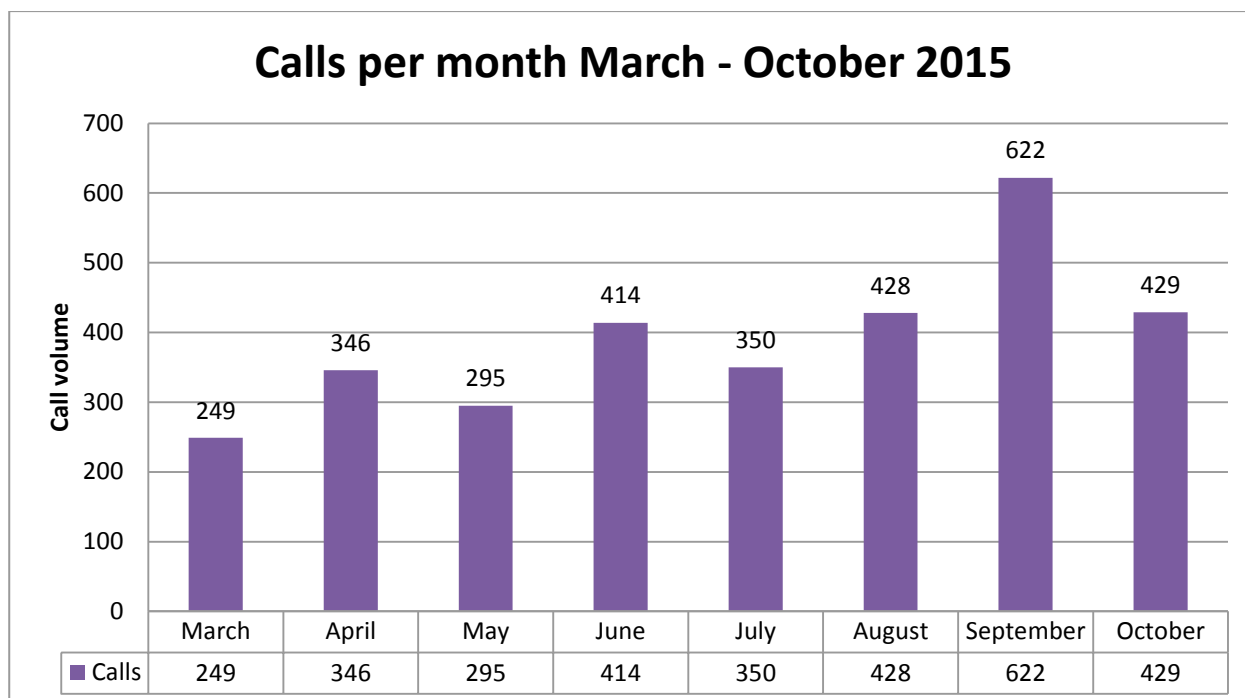
Most respondents from public services (9 out of sixteen) had first heard of the service through Scottish Government communications. Other sources included colleagues and the criminal justice disability project group. Most people (7 of the eighteen who answered) found the contactSCOTLAND website to be the most useful source of information.

Deaf organisations had also first heard of contactSCOTLAND in a variety of ways with the website being the most common and also through professional contacts. For interpreters NHS 24 (eight), the contactSCOTLAND communications manager (seven) and posters and leaflets (six) were the most common ways of having first heard of contactSCOTLAND. Eight respondents also mentioned having heard about it from colleagues and other professional networks and interactions.

The management information tells us how many people are using the service and provides some indications of how the service is being used. There has been a sustained increase in the uptake of the service since its expansion from NHS 24 to all public sector services via contactSCOTLAND. The management information is set out in Annex 1 and suggestions for the collection of monitoring data are discussed in the conclusions and recommendations.

Between March and October 2015, there were a total of 3133 calls to contactSCOTLAND. As shown in the chart below there were an average of 392 calls a month, a sustained uptake from the 249 calls received in the first month of expanded operation in March 2015, but lower than the peak of 622 in September 2015.

Graph 1: contactSCOTLAND monthly call numbers.



Source: contactSCOTLAND monthly service update: October 2015

The NHS 24 pilot project received 15 VRS calls in 2012 (April – December), 36 calls in 2013 and 90 calls in 2014.

The contactSCOTLAND providers are also able to provide some high level information on how contactSCOTLAND is being used. Between March and the end of October 2015 the vast majority of calls had been from BSL users to public services with at least 23 of the 32 local authorities and 13 geographical health boards having been contacted at least once. Calls have been made to a range of NHS and local authority services including hospitals, GPs, out of hours, social work, housing and education. Twelve other public bodies had also been contacted by the end of October.

Twenty-nine respondents to the Deaf community survey had used contactSCOTLAND to make calls. Most people responding had used the service more than once and 11 respondents had used it more than ten times.

Nine of the public services who responded stated that their organisation had used contactSCOTLAND. Seven organisations gave an approximate indication of how many times their organisations had been contacted via contactSCOTLAND between March and October 2015 – most of these had been contacted two-five times with one organisation having been contacted once and one organisation contacted between six-ten times. Three had used the service to contact BSL users.

Six of those responding to the Deaf organisations survey had used contactSCOTLAND (this included two local authority respondents).

The views of non-users

The surveys also provided some limited information on the views of non-users. There were a range of reasons why Deaf BSL users said that they had not used the service. Those who provided information on why they hadn't used it gave a variety of reasons:

- not having needed the service (three),
- being unable to access the app (two)
- not knowing how to use the technology (one)
- and not knowing about the service (two).

More information about the service (seven) and more user friendly technology (four) would encourage some people to use the service.

- A small number of public services gave information on why they had not used the services. Five of eight said it was because they had not needed the service and three said they didn't know or couldn't answer.
- Eight out of nine would use the service again and one wasn't sure. Seven people said that more user friendly technology would encourage them to use the service. In one case the organisation would use it if required by the clients.
- Of the Deaf organisations who had not used the service, one had their own VRS/VRI system, two use another VRS/VRI system and one did not have the necessary technology

Awareness and use of other online BSL translation services

Thirty people who responded to the Deaf community survey were aware of other online BSL interpreting services (including five people who were not aware of contactSCOTLAND). Seventeen people had used other online services. They had used these services to:

- Contact public services (13)
- Contact private sector companies (seven)
- Contact third sector organisations (six)
- Contact public services outside Scotland (five)
- For business or work (nine)
- On behalf of someone they care for or support (four)

Three people who were not aware of contactSCOTLAND had used other VRS services to contact public services. There were also ten people who were aware of contactSCOTLAND (with varying degrees of understanding of the service) and who had used other VRS services (which may involve a cost to the user) to contact public services. Although the scale cannot be assessed from these very small numbers it does indicate the possibility that people may be using commercial services to make calls that come within the remit of contactSCOTLAND. This suggests an on-going need to raise awareness and understanding of contactSCOTLAND. However, it is also possible that people who were aware of

contactSCOTLAND and had used other VRS services had done so prior to the expansion of contactSCOTLAND or due to a preference for another provider.

Twelve of the public services replying were aware of other online BSL interpretation services. Three organisations had used other services - only one stated what they had used it for which was to contact other departments. Of the Deaf organisations who responded, one provided their own VRS/VRI service and four others were aware of other services and one said that they had used another service to contact private sector organisations.

Awareness raising activities

Public services and Deaf organisations were asked whether they had undertaken any awareness raising activities to inform staff or service users about contactSCOTLAND.

Fourteen of the public services who responded said that they had undertaken awareness raising activities. The most common answers were staff emails or newsletters and information on the intranet although several commented that they had undertaken more than one activity.

Those Deaf organisations which responded had promoted contactSCOTLAND in a variety of ways:

- Two organisations had held staff seminars
- Three had included information in staff emails or newsletters
- One had sent an email to members
- Two had put information on their internet pages
- Six had displayed posters
- Five had put out leaflets
- One had BSL video clips about the service on their website

There is potentially considerable scope to further develop this promotional activity for example, none of those responding had had member events or displayed the contactSCOTLAND logo on their website. Two organisations said that they would promote the service now that they were aware of it.

Promotional activity is also regularly undertaken as part of the contactSCOTLAND service remit. This includes awareness raising sessions and/or practical demonstrations of the service. These have taken place with a range of public bodies and Deaf sector organisations. One-to-one instruction can also be offered to individual Deaf BSL users where practicable.

4. Experience of using contactSCOTLAND

The feedback on using contactSCOTLAND is discussed in this section to help inform an understanding of how people are using contactSCOTLAND and their views on the experience of using the service. Respondents were also asked for their views on the contactSCOTLAND website which is an important part of the contactSCOTLAND service.

Key points:

- Overall, those who had used the service were positive about the ease of use and were satisfied with the service.
- There were concerns about the quality and reliability of the technology.
- Deaf BSL users were positive about the difference that the service had made for them.
- The website was generally regarded as helpful and easy to use.

Views on using contactSCOTLAND

The surveys of individuals, public services and Deaf organisations asked people about their experience of using contactSCOTLAND, and what impact they thought the service had had for them as an individual or for the organisation. Where relevant it was also asked whether they would use the service again or recommend it to other people.

Overall experience

Overall, the feedback from 26 Deaf BSL users was positive, in terms of the ease of use of the service, waiting times, technology and the overall experience of using the service.

- Twenty people found the service easy or fairly easy to use. Five had found it hard or fairly hard to use and one couldn't remember
- Twenty-three people were very or fairly satisfied and three were fairly dissatisfied with the waiting time to connect to an interpreter
- There were slightly more mixed views in terms of satisfaction with the technology. Fourteen people were fairly or very satisfied. Eight people were somewhat or very dissatisfied and four were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- Overall, most people (21) were very or fairly satisfied with their experience of using contactSCOTLAND.

Quality of service

The majority of Deaf BSL user respondents (9 out of 19) felt that the quality of the interpreting and translation was good. Seven additional comments were also received on the translation service. There were positive comments on the quality of the interpreting, however, the technology was again mentioned as an issue here by people who had found that the picture was blurry or frozen¹¹. It was suggested that

¹¹ It is not possible to tell from the feedback provided to what extent problems with the technology arise from technical issues on the user or supplier side

it would be helpful to have a choice of interpreters and to have a visual list of the interpreters who are working for contactSCOTLAND. There was also feedback from two participants at the face-to-face meetings that they had had difficulties with interpreters understanding differences in regional signing. In addition, it was noted at the meetings that it is important for interpreters to be of high quality, particularly for medical related calls. Only one Deaf organisation commented on the quality of the interpretation and translation and they had found it to be satisfactory.

Representatives from public services who had used contactSCOTLAND were asked how satisfied they were with the quality of the technology and the waiting time to connect to an interpreter. Five of seven people were fairly or very satisfied with the quality of the technology although two were very dissatisfied. With regards to waiting time for an interpreter, four people were very satisfied and two were somewhat or very dissatisfied and one was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Those who had used the service were also asked what their staff thought of the interpreting and translation. Five people thought it was good or satisfactory. Among those who had used the service five found it very easy or fairly easy to use, two found it very hard and one didn't know or couldn't answer the question. Overall, from the public services who responded five people were very or fairly satisfied with their experience of using contactSCOTLAND and one was very dissatisfied.

Impact of the service

Respondents were also asked in various ways about the personal or professional impact of the contactSCOTLAND service. Deaf BSL users who had used the service were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with five statements on the impact of contactSCOTLAND. Twenty-six people responded to each of these questions.

- *“contactSCOTLAND has made it easier for me contact public services”*

Nearly all of those who responded (22) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement with only one respondent disagreeing.

- *“The contactSCOTLAND service was available when I need to use it.”*

Nearly all of those who responded (23) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and only 1 disagreed.

- *“I feel confident using contactSCOTLAND”*

Similarly, nearly all of those who responded (23) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, in this case one person strongly disagreed

- *“I feel more independent as a result of the contactSCOTLAND service”*

Overall, 22 people agreed or strongly agreed with this statement with 14 of these strongly agreeing. Two people disagreed.

- *“Nothing has changed for me as a result of using contactSCOTLAND”*

Views were slightly more mixed on this statement. Sixteen people disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 7 people agreed or strongly agreed.

Public services and Deaf organisations were also asked what impact they thought contactSCOTLAND had had for their service. There were a small number of answers to this question. Four of the five who answered said that contactSCOTLAND has made it easier to communicate with Deaf/Deafblind BSL users. One organisation said it had had no impact. One local authority respondent to the Deaf organisations survey felt that it had increased requests for interpretation and five Deaf organisations said that there had been no change for their organisation.

Future use of the service

The majority of those who answered the Deaf community survey (25 of 28) would use the contactSCOTLAND service again. Two additional comments were received which referred to issues with the technology and interpreters as reasons for not using it again. Deaf BSL users who had used the service were also asked if they would recommend it to other people. The majority (22 out of 26 people) would also recommend the service. There were a small number of people asked at the face-to-face meetings who indicated that they would use the service again and would recommend it to a family member or a friend. However, most said that they prefer face-to-face interpreting, although contactSCOTLAND is a supplementary service rather than a replacement for face-to-face interpreting.

The contactSCOTLAND website

The contactSCOTLAND website offers information and guidance on the contactSCOTLAND service and the ability to connect to an interpreter through the website. All the surveys asked respondents to rate the clarity and usefulness of the content, the ease of navigation and the website design. Overall, the feedback on the website tended to be positive from each respondent group.

Seventeen Deaf BSL users provided feedback on the contactSCOTLAND website. People tended to find that the website was clear and useful and that they were able to find the information that they required. Eight public service respondents provided feedback. Overall, there was positive feedback on clarity, usefulness and ease of navigation, but more mixed views on the appearance of the website.

Overall, the feedback from interpreters was also positive with the majority (of 20 respondents) of the rating each of these aspects as good. Five Deaf organisations provided feedback. Overall, people were satisfied with the different elements of the website, although there was one poor rating on both the ease of navigation and website appearance.

5. What works well and what could be improved about contactSCOTLAND?

One important purpose of the survey was to understand views on what worked well and what could be improved about the contactSCOTLAND service in order to help inform service improvements. This covered both the current service delivery model and how it could be developed in the future. Each of the surveys¹² therefore asked what people liked best about contactSCOTLAND, what they liked least, and what, if any, improvements they would like to see. Each survey also asked for any further comments on the contactSCOTLAND service and these have been included in the discussion below.

Key points:

- contactSCOTLAND was regarded positively for increasing access to services, and increasing independence. It was well regarded as a supplementary service.
- The quality and reliability of the technology was the least well liked aspect and seen as an area for improvement.
- Suggested improvements included expanding the operating hours and scope of the service; ensuring high standards and choice of interpreters and more awareness raising and guidance for the service.

What do people like best about contactSCOTLAND?

Overall, the main positive feedback from all surveys was that contactSCOTLAND improves access for Deaf BSL users to public services.

Eighteen comments were received from Deaf BSL users about what they like best about contactSCOTLAND. The main themes that these comments covered were:

- Generally positive comments on the service (3) e.g. 'effective', 'quick and smooth'
- Being able to use BSL to contact public services (9)
- Improved access to services (4)
- Increased independence (2)
- Helpful interpreters (1)
- There were also five comments at the end of the survey on finding the service easy to use and beneficial in day to day life (5),

¹² Due to a technical error no responses were received to these questions on the public services survey but information was gathered from the 'any further comments' question. Public service respondents also encountered a problem with the survey in not being able to tick all boxes. It is therefore possible that some answers about awareness raising activities and the impact of the service are an underestimate.

Seventeen interpreters provided information on what they like best about contactSCOTLAND. The key feedback was that it improves Deaf people's access to public services, and the associated benefits of increased independence, empowerment and choice. An example was provided that by enabling easier access to GP appointments the service helps people to manage their health better. It provides a supplementary service to face-to-face interpreting. There were also additional comments at the end of the survey restating the positive feedback on the service and the benefits that it offers for users.

Three comments were received from Deaf organisations offering general support for the concept of contactSCOTLAND and the increased access to interpreters. Public service respondents also provided positive feedback particularly relating to the organisational benefits for interaction with customers and the potential for further roll out and use of the service. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial, and would improve access to justice and efficiency if it were available to solicitors when their client is entitled to legal aid.

What do people like least about contactSCOTLAND?

Twenty three comments were received from Deaf BSL users regarding what they like least about the service. The most commonly referred to issues (eight comments) related to the quality of the technology including blurry pictures and pictures which keep freezing and disrupting the signing. Other comments referred to finding the service hard to use (two comments), and two comments raising issues with interpreters. One person also commented that they would like to be able to contact other services such as banks and utility companies. In the additional comments at the end concerns were raised over how the service was implemented, the quality of interpreting and technology and potential loss of face to face interpreting (3). There were also ten comments from people who said there was nothing that they didn't like about the service.

There were five comments from Deaf organisations all of which referred to various aspects of the quality and reliability of the technology, including the speed of the connection, the picture quality and the lighting. One respondent also thought that the service was for local authorities and the NHS whereas it can be used to contact any public service.

Fourteen interpreters responded to the question about what they like least about contactSCOTLAND. In a few cases people said they didn't feel that there were any negative aspects to the service, in part because it is and should be used as a supplementary service to face to-face interpreting. It was noted that the service is not suitable for all interactions and may potentially be under-utilised for the cost of the service. Other issues that were commented on were the operating hours with two people suggesting that it would be good to have 24 hour access, particularly in order to contact NHS 24. There were also suggestions that there was a need for increased awareness and understanding of what the service offers (for all users, including interpreters). One respondent raised a concern that the current providers

were not registered as an interpreting agency with the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters.

Some technical issues were by raised public services regarding accessing the contactSCOTLAND service:

- One case related to a specific issue of system compatibility experienced by one local authority that had not yet been fully resolved impeding wider usage of the service.
- Two mentions were also made of difficulties with the customer's internet connection.
- One organisation also commented that they found the website difficult to navigate and it was not obvious that you had to click on the contactSCOTLAND logo to connect.
- An issue was raised around not receiving a message about being a queue if an interpreter wasn't immediately available, leaving the caller unsure as to whether to stay on the line or not.

Improvements to the contactSCOTLAND service

Twenty-three comments were received from Deaf BSL users in terms of possible improvements to the scope and delivery of the service. Some of these comments contained more than one suggestion. The main themes that suggested improvements related to were:

- **Quality of the technology (10 comments)**
These comments referred to the speed of the connection and the network infrastructure, and the quality and clarity of the images onscreen.
- **Improvements to the interpreting service (4 comments)**
These comments covered having a minimum qualification level for interpreters, providing specific training for interpreters on online interpreting and having a gender choice of interpreters.
- **Awareness raising and training for users (six comments)**
Suggested awareness raising and training included BSL video demonstrations of how to use the service, and information sessions and training on how to use the service for the Deaf community.
- **Service extensions (Three comments)**
Two users also suggested that widening the range of services accessible through contactSCOTLAND would be an improvement. Suggested services were HMRC and Childline (in addition to banks and utility services suggested in response to an earlier question). It was also suggested the service could be extended to Deaf children in mainstream schools.

At the face-to-face meetings one person said they would like the service to be a 24/7 service. In line with survey respondents suggestions, several people would like

to see the video quality improved. Some people also commented on the information about contactSCOTLAND and would like to see more in BSL or in plainer English, while others would like to see more information in BSL rather than English as they do not understand English.

Fifteen interpreters offered comments on what improvements they would like to see. These mainly referred to service extensions: primarily to offer a 24 hour service and to cover emergency calls but other suggestions were to roll out across the UK and to enable the service to be used to contact private sector companies. There were also several comments relating to staffing which covered enabling callers to see who the interpreters were before connecting; increasing the number of interpreters to avoid long waits; and ensuring appropriate registration and regulation. There were also suggestions again for more awareness raising (something that was reiterated in the additional comments at the end of the survey) and guidance to support people to find out how the service works and get used to this way of working with an interpreter.

On a related technology point, it was suggested that it would be helpful to have BSL guidance available within the app to help people use it. It was also suggested that users should not have to register for the service. There were also some additional comments on how the service operates including the need for transparency in how the next phase of the service is tendered and ensuring that the calls that are being made fall within the service remit.

There were also five comments on service improvements from Deaf organisations. These suggestions were: improving the speed of the connection and quality of the picture; improving the reliability of the platform; making the system more user friendly and accessible; and improving the quality of interpreters. There were five additional comments from Deaf organisations that included positive feedback, a need for increased publicity and support, and a suggestion that it should form part of the national planning process associated with the BSL (Scotland) Act.

In addition to the information gathered through the stakeholder consultation, the contactSCOTLAND website also offers the opportunity to provide feedback. This has provided some further suggestions for service improvements. In the case of opening earlier to allow people to phone for doctor's appointments when the surgery opens the change has already been made. Further suggestions were that the service should be extended to third sector organisations and organisations carrying out work funded by public bodies.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The review of the contactSCOTLAND BSL pilot service was undertaken in order to understand views and experiences of users and stakeholders of the expanded service and to help contribute to the development and specification of a sustainable service. It considered the broader policy context, changes in uptake to the service and sought to gather the views of the various stakeholder groups. As discussed there were various challenges in gathering views and the feedback has been limited. Nonetheless it provides some important insights into the nature, awareness, scope and impact of the service from the perspective of those using the service as well as those with little experience of the service.

Main findings

The review indicated that as part of a range of interpreting options, contactSCOTLAND offers a valuable service to the Deaf community. Those who have used the service have been able to access a range of public services and in doing so have benefited from increased independence, empowerment and choice. Overall, those who had used the service were positive about the ease of use and were satisfied with the service. However, it's clear that improvements could be made, particularly around the quality and reliability of the technology as users have experienced problems. The review also found that awareness and understanding of the service could be improved.

The experience of those who had used the service was mainly positive, with users and other stakeholders suggesting that it offered a means for Deaf BSL users to increase their access to services. The various ways in which users felt that the service could be improved related to user guidance, the interpreting service, and the service remit. The need for the quality and reliability of the technology to be improved and sustained was stressed by many review participants. Improvements related to the interpreting service were mainly about having a choice of interpreter and improving the queuing system. The provision of awareness raising and training and additional guidance in BSL were suggested. There were a range of suggestions for extending the service including the operating hours and the range of the organisations who can be contacted. There was limited feedback from non-users, but it was suggested that more information about the service and more user friendly technology could increase use of the service.

Recommendations for on-going improvement

The extended contactSCOTLAND service is currently being piloted with the intention to move to full implementation in Autumn 2016. Based on the information available in this review the following recommendations have been put forward for the development of the service and to help inform the development of a new service specification.

- There is an on-going need for awareness raising and outreach work to increase the use and understanding of contactSCOTLAND and its remit alongside other interpreting options.
- The survey responses suggest a number of potential avenues for doing this including the provision of additional BSL guidance on how to use the service and increased promotional activity from public services and Deaf networks. This may require initial work with these organisations on the role and purpose of contactSCOTLAND.
- In order to overcome some of the challenges in seeking feedback on the service, the development of forums for on-going feedback could be considered whether through an online user group or online comments or other appropriate options.
- The quality and reliability of the technology were recurring themes, suggesting a need for this to be kept under review and to ensure that adequate technical support and guidance is available.
- Consideration should be given to the options for extending the access to additional services.
- There is currently a limited range of systematic management information on the service. A wider range of information on levels of regular and unique users, where calls are being directed and user feedback would enable more in-depth on-going service monitoring and evaluation.

Annex 1: Call information

There are two key sources of management information about the contactSCOTLAND service. The call records system collects the following information:

- User
- Time of call
- Duration of calls
- Abandoned calls
- Queue time

In addition, in order to provide supplementary information during the pilot period, interpreters complete forms following each call¹³ which has provided additional information on the services contacted. Information is also collected on website traffic. The table below summarises the main information collected on service usage and website traffic.

Summary of key call statistics

During the period of the review (March-October 2015) calls have been connected to over half of local authorities, and 12 out of 14 NHS boards as well as a small number of other public bodies. The vast majority of calls have been from Deaf BSL users contacting public services.

Table 2 shows the services that have been contacted more than once between March – October 2015. It provides an indication of service use. Table 3 provides the monthly call information. The website traffic is shown in Chart 2.

¹³ On occasions where interpreters take calls back to back it may not be possible to fill in the details for each call.

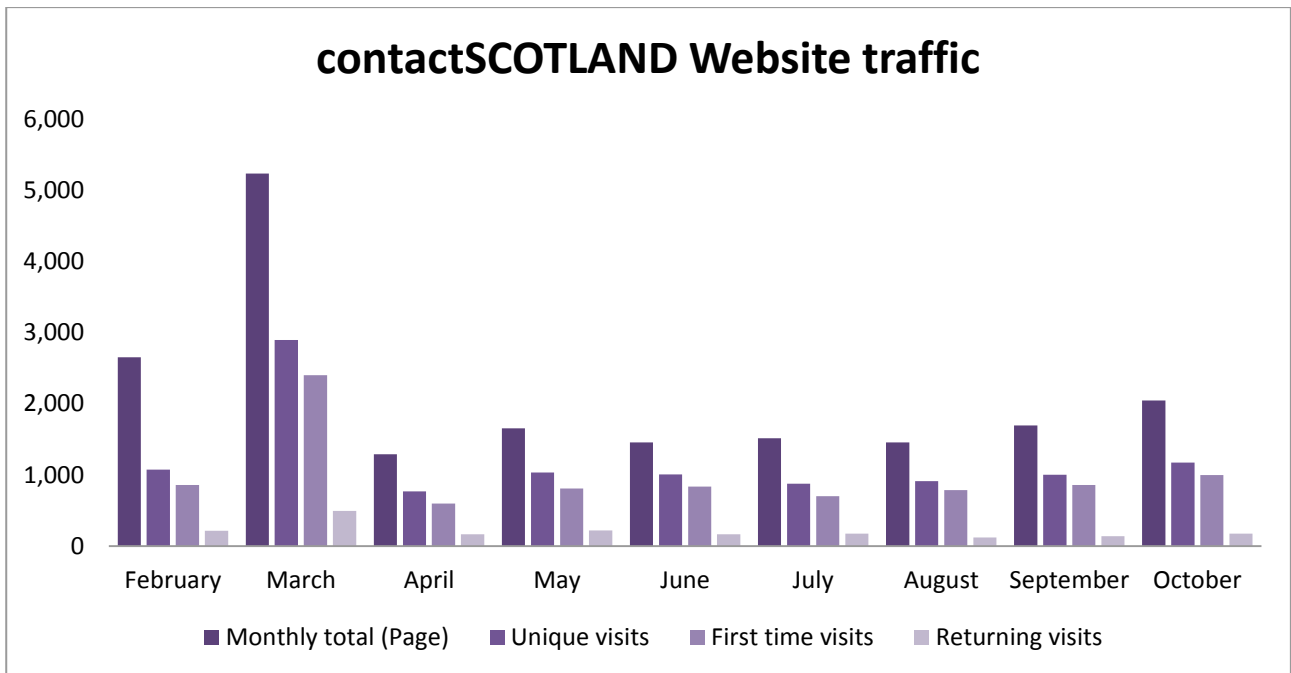
Table 2: Snapshot of service use March – October 2015

Local authority	Public body	NHS
Aberdeenshire Council	DWP (Job Centre Plus)	Ayrshire & Arran
Argyll and Bute Council	DVLA	Breathing Space
City of Edinburgh Council	HMRC	Forth Valley
Dundee City Council	Police Scotland	Fife
East Dunbartonshire Council	SAAS	Grampian
East Lothian Council	National Museum of Scotland	Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Edinburgh City Council	Scottish Legal Aid Board	Highland
Falkirk Council	Scottish Parliament	Inverclyde
Fife Council	Court Service	Lanarkshire
Glasgow City Council	Caledonian MacBrayne	Lothian
Highland Council	Registry Office (Edinburgh)	NHS24
Inverclyde Council	Child support agency	Shetland
Midlothian Council		Tayside
Moray Council		Western Isles
North Ayrshire Council		
North Ayrshire Council		
Perth and Kinross Council		
Renfrewshire Council		
Shetland Islands Council		
South Lanarkshire Council		
West Dunbartonshire Council		
West Lothian Council		
Western Isles		

Table 3: Monthly Calls March – October 2015

Month	Calls	Duration (total)
March	249	18h 30m
April	346	21h 04m
May	295	21h 28 m
June	414	34h 31m
July	350	33h 05m
August	428	32h 12m
September	622	40h 50m
October	429	34h 18m
Total	3133	235h 58m
Average (month)	392	27h

Chart 2: website traffic February – October 2015



Annex 2: Methods and Evaluation framework

Stakeholder consultation

Fourteen face-to-face meetings with 166 participants were held in a range of locations across Scotland (including meetings that were held for other purposes and incorporated questions on the contactSCOTLAND service). The vast majority of people attending these meetings had not heard of contactSCOTLAND suggesting the need for on-going awareness raising work.

Four online survey questionnaires were prepared for; Deaf BSL users; Deaf networks and organisations; interpreters; and public services. These surveys were developed in consultation with members of the Deaf Sector Partnership and the contactSCOTLAND implementation group. A BSL version of each survey was also available online. The surveys were available for completion during the following periods:

- Surveys for Deaf BSL users, Deaf networks and public services: 11 September 2015 – 14th October
- Interpreter Survey: 29th September – 14th October.

The surveys were issued by the DSP who were responsible for promoting the surveys and issuing reminders. The links to the surveys were made available on the DSP and contactSCOTLAND websites. Letters were sent to all public authorities making them aware of the survey and links were also sent to Deaf networks and organisations asking them both to complete the survey on their own behalf and to make their members and clients aware of the opportunity to provide feedback on the contactSCOTLAND service. The contactSCOTLAND service providers also undertook some promotion of the survey with users of the service.

The surveys were tailored for each stakeholder group, and based on the following themes:

- Background information on the respondent
- Awareness and understanding of contactSCOTLAND
- Experience of using contactSCOTLAND (or why not used)
- Views on different aspects of the service
- What works and what could be improved about contactSCOTLAND.

Who responded:

Deaf community survey

Forty-seven responses were received to the Deaf community survey. A further 9 responses to the section on the experience of using contactSCOTLAND were collected through random call backs to service users and these have been combined with the main survey making a total of 56 responses. The degree of

completeness of responses varied. All discussion in the report refers only to those who answered that question.

The vast majority of those who responded were Deaf BSL users. There was a fairly even split between male and female respondents. Of those who provided their gender 25 were female and 21 were male. Responses were received from at least 14 different local authority areas with the most responses (9) from Glasgow City. No responses were received from the Highlands and Islands areas. Just over half of respondents were aged between 30-49. Only six were under 30 or 65 or older.

Public services survey

Twenty six responses were received to the public services survey. These included responses from staff working in local authorities, the health sector, legal and criminal justice bodies, the Public Services Ombudsman, Student Awards Agency Scotland, and Skills Development Scotland. Respondents tended to answer based on their own role and experience and therefore these cannot be considered as organisational responses. The roles that respondents worked in covered policy, equalities, corporate functions, social work, disability support, speech and language therapy, sensory impairment and participation.

Interpreter survey

Thirty-six responses were received to the interpreter survey. Two-thirds of those who responded work on a freelance basis. Those who responded worked in a wide range of geographical areas covering all of Scotland (and in some cases also working UK wide) although a majority worked across the central belt.

Deaf organisations survey

Fourteen responses were received to the Deaf organisations survey. However, not all of these were from Deaf organisations as two were from local authorities, one from an academic and one from a working group member. The coverage of those who responded was predominantly in the central belt with some working across Scotland or further afield.

The original proposal from the DSP had included discussion groups, however, for the reasons discussed above only limited information was generated, usually through existing meetings, with most of those attending not familiar with the contactSCOTLAND service.

Management Information

The management information and additional material gathered for evaluation purposes have provided important contextual information for the review. Information is provided in the form of monthly call reports generated by the system and additional forms filled by interpreters on call completion. Full details of the call information are given at Annex 1.

Other evidence sources

The review is focused on the views and experiences of service users and potential users. It has not included an in-depth review of existing evidence but has taken

account of several existing evidence sources in order to understand the context for the review. These include the preliminary evaluation of the NHS 24 pilot, and international evidence and comparisons¹⁴.

The research questions for the review were informed by a logic model based evaluation framework. The framework sets out the anticipated short, medium and long term outcomes from contactSCOTLAND alongside the inputs, activities and assumptions that underpin the service. It was intended that this could guide not only the review of the service extension pilot but also contribute to future monitoring and evaluation activity.

¹⁴ In relation to evidence sources, Professor Graham Turner of Heriot-Watt (at a meeting on 11 November 2015) provided helpful information on existing evidence and a recent European Union communications pilot for deaf and hard of hearing citizens (INSIGN).

Contact Scotland Evaluation Framework

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes -- Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short	Medium	Long
Funding Staff Interpreters IT	Recruitment of interpreters Training of interpreters Promotion and awareness raising for deaf community Promotion among public services Data monitoring	Deaf people NHS boards Local Authorities Other public services	The deaf community has increased knowledge and awareness of Contact Scotland Public services have increased knowledge and awareness of contactSCOTLAND Sufficient high quality interpreters to meet demand. Increased use of contactSCOTLAND Improved access to public services for deaf people	Deaf users find contact SCOTLAND easy to use and are confident in the service Increased digital participation Increased usage of public services Improved service delivery for deaf people	Equal access to public services for deaf people Deaf people have more control, influence and self-sufficiency in their lives Deaf people have increased quality of life and well-being

Assumptions

Public services will use and promote the service
 Deaf people will use the service
 There is a sufficient pool of interpreters

External Factors

Broadband infrastructure

Evaluation Scope

The evaluation will focus primarily on the short term outcomes with some indicative findings on the medium term outcomes. It will draw on usage data and perceptions of the deaf community and public service providers.

Evaluation Questions

1. Has there been a change in the awareness and uptake of the Contact Scotland service?
2. What are the views of public services and users as to what works and what could be improved from their experience of the extended pilot?
3. What factors are currently influencing uptake and usage of services?
4. What is the evidence for future delivery options?
5. What are the information gaps for the further development of effective BSL video relay service delivery?

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact social_research@gov.scot for further information.



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