

## **Gillian**

Born Deaf.

### **Experiences of using healthcare**

Gillian has asked several times for an interpreter to be present at her GP appointments, despite having a letter to say an interpreter would be available, no one arrived.

After calling NHS 111, due to abdominal pain, an interpreter was requested from Action Deafness and Gillian was taken to A&E. No interpreter arrived, so Gillian's PA had to communicate on her behalf. Despite being admitted for three days, there was only one occasion when an interpreter was connected through Sign Video, but the technology didn't work. Gillian had to try and communicate through written English, which is not her preferred form of communication. It is really important for Gillian that she has an interpreter when accessing health care. Gillian felt unable to understand her medical condition and the treatment she was given. The lack of understanding left Gillian feeling stressed and uncomfortable. Gillian feels like the delay adds to her concern and worry.

Gillian has had to leave hospitals as interpreters that were booked in advance of her appointment did not turn up. She has felt that healthcare staff did not know how to deal with a deaf person. Gillian does not have hearing aids, but she did use an Audiology Department as she had wax build up, unfortunately an interpreter was not booked for her audiology appointment, and she believes staff there do not sign.

Gillian has Type 2 diabetes, and her eye screening appointment has been delayed 3 times. She has been told by an optician that one of her eyes is damaged and that she would need to go to a new Doctor, but this has not yet happened. Gillian is worried that she is not receiving the correct treatment in a timely way, and that this could potentially impact further on her health.

Gillian pays a subscription to SignVideo, (BSL video remote interpreting and BSL video relay service provider) for a limited number of different health services. BSL Health Access was set up for free during the pandemic, but funding has now been stopped. NHS 111 does provide a free service for deaf patients and SignHealth (Deaf health charity) have recently set up BSL 999. Gillian has used NHS 111 through SignVideo with support from her PA.

Gillian has regular appointments to discuss her mental health and an interpreter is not always available for these sessions. At a session in Birmingham, at The Jasmin Suite, there were staff who could sign and other

deaf people, Gillian enjoyed these sessions, but her mobility issues made it difficult to attend. There was no equivalent service available in Warwickshire.

### **NHS Improvements**

When asked what improvements the NHS could make to help deaf people, Gillian found it difficult to think of suggestions but agreed that having the right to access to an interpreter, and to have access to making complaints would be very useful.

Gillian believes that the frustration, upset and anxiety has had an impact on her, she feels ignored and cast aside. She feels there is an imbalance between how deaf and hearing people are treated.