

999 BSL Emergency Video Relay Service: Annual Report (2025/2026)



July 2026

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Headline summary

- The **999 BSL** Emergency Video Relay Service continues to deliver reliable and effective access to emergency services for Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users across the UK. Sign Language Interactions (SLi) maintains ongoing compliance with Ofcom's Approval Criteria for Emergency Video Relay Service Providers, as detailed in this report.
- In the fourth year of operation, the 999 BSL service received approximately **18,900 calls** (an average of **52 calls** per day), a **5.4% increase** on the previous year. The most typical* caller waiting time across all calls was just **3 seconds**.

Service level challenges

- During the fourth year of service delivery, SLi continued to face operational challenges that, on occasion, impacted our ability to meet Ofcom's primary KPI of answering calls within five seconds (PCA-5 %), as defined in the Approval Criteria. The two principal challenges were:
 - **Nuisance callers:** Nuisance calls continue to disrupt the service on an almost daily basis. Their impact on service performance remains significant, and a dedicated section later in this report provides further detail on the nature of this issue and the measures SLi has implemented to mitigate it.
 - **Calls from hearing users:** The service continues to receive calls from hearing individuals who mistakenly believe it provides a general video route to the emergency services. Where such calls relate to a genuine emergency, our interpreters connect the caller to the appropriate 999 service and remain on the line to provide support throughout the interaction.
- To address these challenges and drive continuous service improvement, SLi undertook a number of key initiatives during the reporting period, including:
 - Working closely with British Telecom (BT), the Emergency Authorities (EAs) and Ofcom to progress measures aimed at reducing the ongoing impact of nuisance callers, ensuring the service remains available for those who genuinely require it.
 - Continuing to monitor and expand the pool of qualified SLi interpreters available to support the 999 BSL service, increasing staffing resilience and capacity to manage peak demand and overflow calls.
 - Implementing innovative technical solutions to identify and manage persistent nuisance callers, while ensuring that legitimate BSL users can continue to access the service without disruption.

Nuisance callers

- The service continues to be impacted by nuisance and/or repeat callers, the majority of whom are hearing individuals who do not require access to the service. This misuse reduces interpreter availability and affects response times for genuine 999 BSL users. Despite being a young service, SLi has found success in initiatives developed to manage and monitor these callers. These measures work to protect service delivery as much as possible, and both proactive and reactive work continues to target emerging trends and individual behaviours.
- SLi takes a multi-pronged approach on technical, operational and personnel initiatives to support with the impact of these callers.
- Technical and operational controls continue to be developed to limit technological exploits or misuse pathways.
- SLi actively works with the emergency services (usually the Police), family and care workers, as well as other agencies, to manage and limit inappropriate use of 999 BSL on an individual basis, leaving access to voice 999 unaffected.
- SLi works closely with Ofcom, the 999 Liaison Committee and both UK and international law enforcement agencies to strengthen prevention and response approaches.
- Robust compliance and data governance procedures support police investigations with call data and recordings as necessary.
- SLi recognises that interpreters may require both practical and professional support following calls and operates a 24/7 framework of multidisciplinary support services for the team. This includes prompt access to technical support, professional debriefing, and a clear managerial escalation pathway to support both practice and wellbeing.
- This combined approach supports the service to reduce the misuse, mitigate the impact, and provide a consistent, robust response for interpreters affected by incidents.

Quality Assurance

As stated in the Ofcom Approval Criteria, SLi has a responsibility to monitor and uphold the quality of the service. We undertake the following ongoing training and quality checks on our team of interpreters:

- Interpreters engage in robust initial screening to ensure they meet required qualifications and registration standards (qualified and registered with NRCPD and 3 years post qualification experience) and are suited to working in high-pressure environments while maintaining consistently high-quality interpretation.
- Our comprehensive initial training was redeveloped and extended this year to contextualise the learning taken place since the service was established. This mandatory training, and regular refreshers, operates alongside structured reflective practice sessions to ensure interpreters remain up to date with service protocols, best practice and emerging learning.
- Structured sessions support interpreters in developing their professional judgement and responding effectively to the complex nature of 999 BSL calls.
- The interpreters take part in regular operational communications for access to up-to-date service information, enabling awareness of emerging patterns, risks and expectations.
- A programme of regular quality assurance checks is in place, with feedback provided to interpreters and learning applied across the team to support continuous improvement.

- SLi continues to develop its training approach, including enhanced practice-based learning to strengthen interpreters' linguistic capability and readiness to manage complex call types.

Collaboration

- Throughout the reporting period, SLi maintained regular engagement with Ofcom and BT to review service performance, discuss operational challenges, and support the continued development of the service. We are grateful for the constructive partnership, expertise, and support provided by both organisations, which have been instrumental in ensuring the ongoing success of this critical service. We look forward to building on this strong collaborative relationship in the years ahead.

* the use of the word 'typical' refers to the median value.

Ofcom's formal approval of SLi's emergency video relay service (subsequently named 999 BSL) can be found [here](#)

In accordance with our requirement to comply with full accountability and transparency regarding the performance of the service, details of the approval criteria and KPI's are included below:

Section	Title	Text	SLi's comments
1	General Compliance	The service must be an Emergency Video Relay Service as referred to in the General Conditions and must be capable of satisfying all the requirements set out in the Emergency Video Relay General Condition at C5. 'Emergency Video Relay Service' means any service which:	SLi confirms it operates an Emergency Video Relay Service (as referred to in the General Conditions) and satisfies on an ongoing basis the requirements set out in the Emergency Video Relay General Condition at C5, including those related to accessibility of the service, communication speeds and the ability for the End-User to communicate via text.
		(a) for the purposes of requesting and receiving emergency relief from Emergency Organisations, provides British Sign Language translation and relay facilities for emergency communications to be conveyed via video between any End-User and Emergency Organisations;	
		(b) is capable of being accessed by End-Users of the service from readily available compatible terminal equipment with video capabilities, including smartphones and computers or tablets;	
		(c) provides facilities for access to Emergency Organisations and is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week;	
		(d) insofar as reasonably practicable, allows for communication between End-Users of the service at speeds equivalent to voice communications;	
2	Accountability and reporting	(e) provides a means of communicating by text in conjunction with video relay.	SLi confirms that it has reported to Ofcom quarterly and also on a monthly basis since the service launch in June 2022 about the operation of the service. The data provided by SLi includes those listed in this requirement and is based upon
		The service provider must monitor and report to Ofcom, every quarter, on its operation. The report must be in a form specified by Ofcom and must include the following information:	
		a) number of app downloads;	
		b) number of emergency communications;	
		c) average speed of answering, measured in 15-minute intervals; and	

		d) number of complaints and information about the nature of the complaint (without sharing or publication of details that could identify any complainant).	the reporting criteria published separately by Ofcom. A subset of those reporting metrics is included in Annex 1 of this Annual Report.
		The provider must also publish an annual report covering compliance with the Approval Criteria and any related issues as directed by Ofcom.	
3	Access	The service provider must do the following: a) Make provision for End-Users to access the Emergency Video Relay Service via a dedicated app and a dedicated website, free of charge (including but not limited to the app itself being available free of charge).	SLi provide End-Users access to the service via dedicated 999 BSL apps available on both iOS and Android, plus through the website at www.999bsl.co.uk .
		b) Ensure clear and user-friendly instructions on how to use the Emergency Video Relay Service are made available in both British Sign Language (BSL) and English on the app and the website.	SLi confirms that clear and user-friendly instructions are available in both languages via the apps and website and can be found at: (i) https://999bsl.co.uk/how-to/ and at https://999bsl.co.uk/faqs/
		c) Ensure, where technically feasible, that the incident location information is automatically obtained from the device being used by the End-User in an efficient and timely way e.g. automatically via the app or website. The validity of the incident location information must always be verified with the End-User in BSL.	SLi confirms that <i>where permitted by the End-User in their app/device settings</i> , the incident location is automatically obtained from the device being used by the End-User. SLi interpreters confirm validity of incident location information as part of their standard call-answering procedure.
		d) Maintain a system whereby telephone numbers and/or other contact information from the End-User are obtained to enable call-backs and/or other contact to be made. The retention period for this information must be in line with the retention period used for other emergency relay services and the service provider must comply with all applicable data protection and privacy laws.	As part of its technical solution, SLi has a system which enables call-backs to be made to End-Users without the need to collect any personal information from them.
		e) Liaise with regulated providers, including during the design and development phase of the service and/or app, with a view to facilitating zero-rating of data used in connection with the service and/or app.	SLi worked extensively with regulated telecoms providers during the first half of 2022 prior to launch to ensure that the SLi system architecture could allow for zero-rating of data used in connection with the service (but not other services that SLi provide). SLi provided regular communications to regulated providers and scheduled a dedicated testing period allowing those regulated providers the opportunity to make test calls to ensure that their own configurations to allow zero-rating of data were correct.
		f) Ensure that the service shall be available to end-users <u>without any requirement to register</u> to use or access the service.	SLi confirms that there is no requirement for End-Users to register to access the service
4	Operational matters	All persons acting as interpreters for the Emergency Video Relay Service must: a) be on the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) register for qualified interpreters;	SLi confirms that all Operational matter requirements, relating to interpreters working on the service, their work environment and tools used to carry out their job are met
		b) have at least three years' post-qualification experience acting as a BSL interpreter in a range of settings; and	

		c) have had a clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check within the last two years.	prior to being allowed to work on the service. The requirements are also re-assessed on an ongoing basis to ensure continual compliance.
		The Emergency Video Relay Service must have a dedicated, well-lit and soundproofed video interpreting room. There should be restricted access to the room.	
		The interpreter should be equipped with a suitable microphone and headset.	
5	Quality of service	Emergency communications must be answered within 5 seconds 95% of the time, measured in 15-minute intervals.	Per the update published by Ofcom on its website on 13 January 2023, the reporting requirement was changed from 15-minute intervals to 24-hour periods, however there is still a requirement to record in 15-minute intervals. SLi includes this data in their monthly reports provided to Ofcom and an overall monthly Quality of service % value is included in Annex 1 of this Annual Report.
		Emergency communications should not be subject to a handover from one interpreter to another unless they continue for more than 30 minutes.	SLi confirms ongoing compliance with requirements related to: interpreter handovers, quality of service checks, recording and retention of video conversations
		Regular bi-monthly quality of service checks of emergency communications must be carried out by senior interpreters retained by the Emergency Video Relay Service.	
		Video conversations must be recorded. Retention of any recording should be in line with the retention periods for emergency voice calls and recordings must be stored safely, securely and accurately, in line with standards for voice calls and the service provider must comply with all applicable data protection and privacy laws.	
6	Adequate resources	The service provider must be able to demonstrate that: a) it has sufficient funds, facilities and staff to provide the Emergency Video Relay Service and enable it to perform properly the administrative, technical and professional work associated with the tasks for which it has been appointed;	Financial information about SLi is included in their Annual Report available via the Companies House website. SLi staff the service to ensure that incoming calls are dealt with in a timely manner and in accordance with the agreement between SLi and regulated providers prior to service launch.
		b) the systems deployed and managed by the service provider have sufficient technical resilience and resources to provide an uninterrupted service, so far as is technically feasible; and	SLi confirms that their systems provide an uninterrupted service, so far as is technically feasible. SLi's Network Operations Centre (NOC) conducts regular daily test calls into the system. Additionally, SLi have robust incident response procedures, should a technical issue arise.
		c) it has appropriate provision for complaints handling.	SLi have clear signposting on the 999 BSL website to inform the general public how they can make a complaint and a formal complaints procedure to ensure that any and all complaints are handled in a fair and timely manner.

7	Provision on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory terms	(1) The Emergency Video Relay Service provider must: a) undertake to agree to contract in respect of the service on a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory basis as part of any contract with any Regulated Provider or wholesaler and/or some other third party intermediary; and	SLi confirms that the 'FRAND' requirements listed were met as part of the contract process and will continue to be met as part of any ongoing contract requirements.
		b) to ensure the inclusion of a clause in such contracts, documenting that the contract has been agreed on that basis.	
		(2) If the Emergency Video Relay Service provider enters into a contract with an intermediary in respect of Emergency Video Relay, the Emergency Video Relay Service provider must: require as part of that contract, that the intermediary shall contract with Regulated Providers on a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory basis; and that the intermediary shall ensure the inclusion of a clause in its contracts, documenting that the contract has been agreed on that basis.	

ANNEX 1: SLi REPORTED KPI'S FOR JULY 2025 – JUNE 2026

Measure	2025						2026					
	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Total calls received	2,184	1,798	1,454	1,487	1,217	1,512	1,576	1,482	1,744	1,317	1,617	1,519
Percentage of calls answered within 5 seconds, 'PCA-5 %' (KPI 95%)	85%	86%	86%	85%	87%	89%	86%	88%	90%	85%	83%	85%
Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds, 'PCA-20 %'	93%	95%	95%	95%	96%	97%	95%	97%	97%	96%	92%	96%
Number of complaints received	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

1. As agreed with Ofcom, these metrics:
 - a. exclude calls that are abandoned/hung-up by the caller within 5 seconds (this is the same as for voice 999 calls)
 - b. exclude daily internal test calls made by SLi to test the functioning of the service & endpoints.
 - c. include all calls received into the service, including those deemed by SLi to be nuisance, lewd or harassing in nature.
2. All complaints received were dealt with in accordance with SLi 999 BSL complaints policy.