



## Craig Whittaker MP

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### **Response to Hearing Loss (Action on Hearing Loss Campaign) - July 2017**

Thank you for contacting me about hearing loss.

I believe it should be a priority to help people with hearing loss into work, and ensure they have the correct support while working. I am proud that 70 per cent of people whose main long term health condition is a difficulty in hearing are now in work, with their unemployment rate almost halving since 2012. With the overall employment rate at almost 75 per cent, more needs to be done.

Access to Work grants can pay for practical support if you have a disability, health or mental health condition. The scheme features specialist teams who provide a dedicated service to particular groups of customers, including those with hearing loss. People who are deaf or have hearing loss are one of the largest groups of people supported by the scheme. The Access to Work Digital Service has recently been launched providing a more convenient, accessible and quicker process which benefited from the help of many deaf and hard of hearing customers in its development. Funding for the scheme is being increased, recognizing expected increases in demand as we help a million more disabled people into work in the coming decade. Access to Work is being promoted through jobcentres, businesses and local organisations.

Access to Work has also been promoted in the Disability Confident Campaign, which provides employers with the tools they need to recruit, retain and develop disabled employees, and aims to reach the widest possible number of employers.

I understand that Ministers have met with Action on Hearing Loss, and meetings such as these have led to work strengthening the processes for booking British Sign Language interpreters, and a joint review of deaf awareness material for health professionals carrying out assessments.

Unfortunately, I could not attend your Parliamentary drop-in, but will continue to follow these matters closely.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP