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DRC launches innovative web service for BSL users

Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) have just been given access to a ground-breaking new service on the Disability Rights Commission's (DRC's) website.

The DRC has just launched 200 pages of employment rights information in British Sign Language in a move seen to be the first such service in this country.

The content focuses on disabled people's employment rights under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The initiative was prompted by the need to ensure deaf people - whose first language is BSL - get vital rights-based information. And now that one third of net surfers use broadband, the ability to view a high quality video clip - in this case, information in BSL - is more assured than pictures viewed via a modem.

The introduction of the BSL web pages follows a DRC live webcast with simultaneous BSL signing and subtitling to launch a major report on website accessibility last year. The webcast was the first of its kind in the UK.

The DRC teamed up with SignPost - part of Tyne Tees TV - to produce the BSL pages for its website.

The employment rights pages in BSL can be viewed at www.drc-gb.org/bsl.

Head of Campaigns & Marketing at the DRC, Tom Berry said:

"We're very proud of the accessibility of the DRC's website - since it was set up, we've been working to ensure it's as user friendly to as many people as possible, as disabled people and those with long-term health conditions have a wide range of communication needs - all of which we need to meet.

"People with a visual impairment, those with a learning disability or mobility impairment have been able to use the site almost from day one. But the technology hasn't quite kept pace with our goals - so getting the site user friendly for people using BSL has been an interesting challenge. Getting rights-based information to deaf people in their preferred format is a great step forward and we're looking forward to translating more of the site content into BSL."