

Frequency Asked Questions

For BSL translation, please visit www.999bsl.co.uk/faqs

Which emergency services can I contact via 999 BSL?

Police, Ambulance, Fire or Coastguard.

When is the service available?

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

How does the service work?

It is simple. You use 999 BSL app or Website to make a call to 999, it will go to British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter first, who will appear on the screen. The BSL interpreter will then call the 999 operator through landline and will relay the conversation. Please see video below for the demonstration.

How can I make a call to 999 BSL?

There are 3 main ways to call, from:

- 999 BSL app for iOS
- 999 BSL app for Android
- 999 BSL website at www.999bsl.co.uk

Can I call the service if I have a general question about how it works?

No. You must only call the service if you have a real emergency. If you have questions about how the service works please email us at info@999bsl.co.uk or visit the website at www.999bsl.co.uk

Can I receive a call back?

Yes, the emergency services can call you back. Please note the instructions below that you should follow for this.

I'm waiting for a callback from the emergency services... what should I do?

If during your call you are told that the emergency services will call you back:

- App – Please keep the app open and active and stay by your device if possible.
- Website – Please don't close your browser. Stay on page and stay by your device if possible.

What is the difference between text relay and video relay?

Text relay relies on written English messages to be exchanged between a deaf and hearing user via a text relay advisor. Text Relay calls typically can take longer than conventional calls as only one person normally speaks/types at a time – exchanges between the deaf and hearing user are designed to be as free-flowing as possible and near real-time, but as they are supported by the text relay advisor they normally take a bit longer (call charges are reduced to take account of this).

Video relay allows deaf people to make a video call in sign language. The interpreter voices what the deaf user says, in near to real time. The interpreter also relays in sign language what the hearing person says, in near real-time. The interpreter can easily manage the conversation to ensure everything is clear and free-flowing.

Do I need to be connected to the internet?

Yes, you must have a good internet connection to use the service, either WiFi or a 3G/4G/5G connection. The better your connection is, the better quality your call will be.

Can I use my iPad / computer/ mobile phone?

Yes! Yes! Yes! You can use a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone to connect to the service. All you need to do is to either download the app on any compatible iOS or Android device, or to go to the website at <https://www.999bsl.co.uk>

Why is my video recorded?

Ofcom require that all types of emergency calls are recorded between the caller and the emergency services. Since video is used for 999 BSL calls, it must be recorded. Recordings are retained for 3 years and stored by SLI securely in a cloud storage location. Recordings may be needed at a later date for evidence. SLI is required to comply with all applicable data protection and privacy laws.

Do I need to register?

No, there is no requirement to register, just download the app or visit the website and call when you have an emergency and need assistance from the Police, Ambulance, Fire & Coastguard.

What should I do if I can't get the app to work?

If you have an emergency and need to call, but can't get the app to work, please access the website at <https://www.999bsl.co.uk> and call us from there.

What should I do if I can't get the app or website to work?

In the highly unlikely event that neither service is working, you should use the Text Relay UK Service (<https://www.relayuk.bt.com/how-to-use-relay-uk/contact-999-using-relay-uk.html>)

Are calls made using 999 BSL free?

Yes, it is completely free of charge.

I was charged data for a call I made to 999 BSL, who do I contact?

Please let us know by emailing us at info@999bsl.co.uk. You will also need to let us know the name of the company that provides your mobile network or your internet service provider.

What if I run out of data - can I still make the call?

Yes. The data you use to make a call to the 999 BSL service from the 999 BSL apps (on iOS or Android), or via the website should not be charged to you. It is the responsibility of your mobile network operator or internet service provider to ensure this.

I want to make a complaint about the service, who should I contact?

We are sorry that you are unhappy with the service you have received. Please send full details via email to feedback@999bsl.co.uk and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Will the app & website track my location?

The app and website will try to track your location. This is done so that emergency services can know where you are and can reach you quickly. You can choose whether to allow the app to share your location in the app settings.

What if the app or website cannot track my location?

In this case, our interpreter will ask you for your location (town/county) and address details during the call.