**Name of Project: SignHealth Deaf Domestic Abuse Service**

**Lead partner: SignHealth**

**Borough: Barnet**

Louise\* lives in Barnet and has been known to our service since 2020. Louise was supported by an IDVA to flee domestic abuse and divorced her husband in April 2021. Her case was closed and Louise referred herself back into the service in November 2022. Louise received support from an IDVA throughout this time.

Louise was physically assaulted by her ex-husband at a deaf event in October 2022. She reported this to the police and he was arrested and released on bail.

Louise experienced the following barriers:

1. On reporting the incident, Louise was left waiting two weeks for an appointment with the police to file a witness statement and to provide evidence. There was a lack of response to emails from the police after her ex-husband breached his bail conditions as the police officer was on annual leave. Louise is still waiting for an appointment to be made with the police officer as her husband is on bail until 9th January. The delay with an appointment has been due to lack of BSL Interpreter provision and the police officer being on long-term leave. This has still not been resolved.

2. The IDVA supported her to apply for a Non-Molestation Order. The solicitor did not book an interpreter and assumed the IDVA would provide one, even after the process of using legal aid to pay for interpreters had been explained. IDVAs book their own interpreters via an Access to Work grant for their professional access needs.

3. Louise had to attend the court hearing remotely and requested special measures to be put in place as she does not want to see her ex-husband on MS Teams. The court didn’t send an invite for MS Teams until the court hearing had started. She saw him on screen and was unable to control the settings to hide his view as her solicitor was speaking on her behalf. Her ex-husband objected to the order, so they will have to go back to court in March 2023. The NMO was granted until the court hearing in March 2023 and legal aid has been granted for the solicitor.

Louise feels very distressed about what happened and is shocked at what her ex-husband did to her. She has felt torn as her children have not seen their father since the incident. She is trying to make arrangements for the children to see their father and is receiving ongoing support from her allocated IDVA. Louise still manages to go work and socialises with friends to get her life back on track. She feels frustrated with the court and the slow response from police and solicitors. We will continue to provide support to Louise.