



THE

TERPTREE TIMES

Experts in World Class Deaf Customer Experience

HAPPY  
NEW YEAR!

JAN  
2019

Louise Harte lost £8,000 to fraudsters from her Metro Bank account. Photograph: Jill Mead for the Guardian



## A DEAF WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE OF RETRIEVING OVER £8000 BACK FROM SCAMMERS

Back in June this year, Louise was enjoying a well-deserved holiday in Cyprus. What she was blissfully unaware of at the time was that a series of events were about to unfold, with extremely upsetting consequences. What transpired would be hard enough for anyone to cope with. But as a deaf person, the issues and problems with the ensuing situation were magnified.

**Here's what happened.** A person(s) unknown to Louise managed to fool the staff in a Three mobile phone store that they were, in fact, Louise. By doing so, they managed to obtain a new sim card for her account.

This only came to light on the last day of the holiday when she tried to use her phone; without success. On her return to the UK, Louise headed immediately to a Three store to ask their assistance in getting her phone back to working order. It was then she realised there was an additional problem. Her bank card was blocked!

Therefore the next 'urgent' visit was to Metro Bank to investigate. She was understandably horrified to discover **£8,371 had been transferred out of her account.**

What ensued was a series of visits to branch; seemingly endless phone calls; and efforts to try to resolve the issues with both **Three** and **Metro Bank.**

Louise described these events as chaotic and stressful because she received little information on how to resolve the issues. She felt utterly lost in what was happening; and as a deaf customer, found it very difficult to communicate with both large businesses.

And some things added further to her stress levels. One: Third party permission had been set-up a year ago allowing her son to contact the bank on her behalf. But this had later on been removed.

Two: It took a whole month to book a BSL Interpreter.

Although this then allowed Louise to discuss what had happened thoroughly, the wait only exacerbated the worry. Since the dreadful

scenario unfolded, Louise has shared a BSL rendition of the story to Facebook. This initial post has since been shared 893 times and I would imagine each of these 893 would have shared countless times again.

The video includes comments from many other deaf people, who have all experienced either poor customer service or fraud. They shared how disempowered this made them feel. What we should understand is that other vulnerable customers may not be able to resolve the issues they face as quickly as Louise. Therefore it's clear that much more consideration should be taken when considering how such customers' needs are met.

Banking issues occurring whilst travelling abroad have always been a challenge for deaf people as they cannot easily contact the bank or other service providers. So the simple act of placing a vulnerability marker on the accounts of their deaf customers would be a massive step forward.

In Louise's situation, if her account had stated she was deaf, should a hearing person have attempted to impersonate Louise, they would have failed. This would offer an additional level of safety to customers that are most vulnerable.

Also, offering vulnerable customers the option to add another person to the account to support them when needed would be an enormous benefit.

Louise is now calling upon businesses to take photos and add them to customers' records. This could act as an extra level of safety as it would allow staff to check the appearance of customers.



## LIP READING THROUGH A DRIVE-THRU

Who doesn't enjoy a coffee on a long drive? (Or even short drive to be honest!) It's kind of a given don't you think? Part of what gets you through the traffic and road works and adds a little 'extra' ingredient' to your journey.

Of course, you need to factor in the extra time needed to stop and purchase your beverage. But 'Drive Thu' coffee stops are popping up all over the UK now, making it more convenient.

One such example is Starbucks at Warwick Services. When I saw it on a recent trip to Birmingham, it was happiness all round, as I could grab my treat without even leaving the car!

### Let me share this experience with you.

After exiting at the right junction when seeing the signs, I patiently waited in the queue. Upon seeing how I would order, I recalled the experiences many of my deaf friends had shared with me.

They had highlighted to me the difficulty of speaking through a microphone to communicate an order without looking at the person face to face. Not ideal as a deaf person as you obviously can't access any of the questions to make a response.

Which leaves only one option. To get out of the car and go into the shop. More than a little frustrating when you know there is a quicker more convenient way available to everyone else, would you agree?

### Technology is allowing for great strides forward

Back to my trip to Birmingham. On this particular and memorable occasion, I experienced first-hand how technology is starting to contribute to positive customer experiences for deaf people.

When driving through to the speaking pillar, I was welcomed by not only a voice but a face. What a shock! I was so used to simply giving my response verbally this was not expected at all.

A video had been positioned in front of the person serving me so I could actually see their face! What a super ingenious way

to maintain that all important human interaction; whilst speeding up the ordering process for both of us.

### Is voice recognition the key here?

It got me thinking. Could this work for deaf customers if it were rolled out across the UK today?

In this instance, the picture was still very pixelated, so I'm not certain that you would ever be able to lip read through a screen like this. But I have no doubt that we will soon have access to the technology that enables a clear visual with live subtitles. Yes, my friends, those days are coming!

As voice recognition gets more powerful, it seems to me there could be massive opportunity for forward-thinking businesses to use this to better serve deaf customers.

Can you imagine a Bank or a Supermarket positioning a screen by the till or service point that produced live verbatim subtitling; so deaf customers could read what the member of staff was saying?

This would mean a world where deaf customers don't have to rely solely on hearing loops in often noisy environments.

It would certainly offer the deaf customer access to everyday communication like they've never experienced before. That would be pretty amazing, wouldn't it?

My key takeaway: Starbucks are looking at different ways to use technology for improving their customer experience.

### What can you do to improve yours?

# A STORY FROM VICTORIA: HOSTAGES NOT OSTRICHES!

Earlier this year, it was my deaf friend Rosie's birthday. I had organised a surprise afternoon tea for her in February, but our plans were completely thwarted by the unprecedented amount of snow!

Due to our crazy lives, always filled with busy weekends, we didn't get to enjoy the planned 'birthday tea' until April.

Although by then it was no longer the surprise I'd hoped for of course! But Rosie thoroughly enjoyed herself, and that was my aim.

When I get together with deaf friends, we find ourselves chatting for hours and sharing stories from our childhood, our relationships, and life in general. One such story was so fantastically funny that I have to share it in the hope you'll love it too!

One of our group of friends, Nikki, was telling us about one of her first dates with her hearing boyfriend. She described how worried she was to be going on a date with a hearing man. She was concerned that she would (as had happened on other occasions) misunderstand what was said.

However, the date started well, and there was definitely a connection forming. Until they started discussing recent

stories in the news that is!

He began to talk about the awful, recent news of hostages being found in the basement of a house.

Nikki looked confused as if she hadn't quite understood what he'd said. He clarified then asked, "Are you okay?" She continued to look confused and finally said "No I understand, but why was he putting ostriches in the basement? And how did he get them down there?"

One simple word and one simple (hilarious!) misunderstanding had them in fits of laughter a long time after!

Studies show that only 30-45% of the English language can be understood through lip reading alone. Which explains Nikki's situation and her perception of what was being talked about.

Can you imagine this happening when communicating to your customers? In a clothes retail environment for example, when asking if your customer would like pockets in their jacket and they think you have asked them if they need a bucket?! It could, of course, be as hilarious as Nikki's story, but equally, it could have a very negative effect on your business too.

Oh, and if you're wondering the outcome of the date... you'll be glad to hear that they're now married and living their happily ever after! The confusing and amusing story undoubtedly made their bond even stronger.



## 50 SHADES LATER

Something the team and I are thoroughly enjoying lately are our regular cinema trips.

We look forward to watching the previews for new releases with our popcorn in our laps; ready for 90 minutes of 'zoning out' to a fantastic film. But within my circle of friends, a simple trip to the cinema takes some planning!

**Let me give you a typical example:**

One of the film franchises I was keen on seeing after reading the books back to back, was the 'Fifty Shades' series (okay, don't judge me here!). I thoroughly enjoyed them and waited excitedly for the first film to be released. It's the kind of film experience to be shared with your girlfriends, and that's exactly what I had planned to do. However, I waited. And waited. But what was I waiting for? The film had been released...

I was waiting for subtitles; because I was going to the cinema with a deaf friend. The first in the franchise was released on 13 February 2015, and we were finally able to see it at our local cinema in Newbury on 10 March 2015. Nearly 4 weeks after the film was released.

And when I went to the cinema with the same friend to see the second in the series a couple of years later, it was still a 4 week wait.

We had to wait patiently, whilst meanwhile, everyone else around us had seen the film. They talked about it, raved about it, and discussed it openly on social media: all whilst we were STILL waiting. Then, finally, a subtitled screening was available. Hoorah!

Now, this is starting to sound like we were absolutely desperate to



see the follow up film (that's partly true, as the first was left with such a cliffhanger!). But in reality, it was the anticipation that was driving us to distraction; built up while having to wait so long to see a 'new' release.

As a hearing person, once a film is released, the choice of dates is vast. We can pre-book our tickets, or go on a whim. We certainly don't have to wait 4 weeks!

What makes the situation even more challenging is that subtitled screening times are only released the Sunday of the previous week. So in this particular situation, we had exactly two days' notice. The ONE and ONLY subtitled screening for 50 Shades Darker in Newbury was 5:20pm on a Tuesday. That meant we both had to leave work early to see the film. Or, we could see wait for it to be released on DVD.

So, we adjusted our schedules accordingly, cancelling previous plans, and booked our tickets. I booked them online on Monday night, and at this point, none of the seats had even been booked (I guess most people had seen the film already!). In fact, we shared the cinema with just 6 others. Although this was a personal experience, it's clear the issues are not unique to our local cinema.



I know of many, many deaf people who feel frustrated and upset about how scheduled subtitled films are on at an inappropriate time and usually on early mornings, before work hours and late in the evening. It is incredibly rare to see a subtitled film on a Saturday too.

**David Deacon, Surrey**



Being deaf has restrictions on our social lives! I can't tell you how many times my friends have said "let's go to see the new film at the cinema" ... I can't, as they never have enough subtitled showings!

Normally, new films won't have a captioned showing until a week or two after the release date, so I miss out on a lot of social outings. The number of people who couldn't be bothered to wait for me is extremely frustrating

**Ellen Parfitt, Norwich**



Deaf customers are still advised to check whether the subtitled screening is going ahead before they actually turn up. Even when you've confirmed the screening, asking to see a scheduled subtitled film once you reach the box office usually results in frantic phone calls to the projection booth. There's nothing quite like being responsible for holding up a queue of people to get your evening off to a pleasant start. You end up holding your breath until the opening credits roll. Sometimes the subtitles appear, sometimes they don't. I know people who have a drawer full of free vouchers, so often have they been let down.

**Charlie Swinbourne, Leeds**

## SO WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Why is it that the 'reasonable adjustment' made by cinemas is that deaf people have to wait for a number of weeks?

There have been many campaigns out there in the deaf community to improve access to cinema. Often times, deaf people miss out on seeing the film entirely, with no subtitled screening being made available at all. Whereas hearing customers have the choice to go to the cinema whenever and wherever they like.

## WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

In the USA, hundreds of cinemas have made 'subtitle glasses' available. Which means only the people wearing the glasses see the subtitles. In Australia, many cinemas have small seat mounted screens offering subtitles.

So, there are solutions already available and being utilised in other countries for deaf cinema-goers, but why has this not yet happened in the UK?

## HOW CAN WE FIX THIS IN THE UK?

Yourlocalcinema.com state that "a personal subtitle solution could help increase the weekly number of subtitled shows from 1,200 to 50,000, allowing much better access for the 11 million deaf people in the UK". It's certainly time for cinemas across the UK to take action and provide more subtitled screenings for deaf customers.

**By NOT doing this they are missing out on a potential 11 million customers and leaving money on the table...**



This month we interviewed Alasdair Mackenzie, the Community Outreach and Engagement Manager at the Houses of Parliament. Their team have been working with terptree to facilitate wider engagement with the Deaf Community.



AN INTERVIEW WITH:  
**ALASDAIR MACKENZIE**



**Alasdair, could you tell us a little about what your team does?**

Yes, certainly. The Education and Engagement Service in the Houses of Parliament exists to provide free training for the public, specifically for groups who want to engage with Parliament. This might include engaging with their Member of Parliament, a Member of the House of Lords, or getting involved with Select Committees. 80% of the time is spent working with target audiences who are statistically less likely to engage with parliament

These include:

- Women
- Young people (aged between 16-24)
- Black and Ethnic Minorities
- People with disabilities
- LGBT

**How did you get involved with terptree?**

The first thing that happened was Victoria came to meet with the team here to tell us about the work terptree do with the Deaf Community. After that I visited terptree's office on a historic day (the day of the Brexit referendum) to provide some training to the terptree team on how Parliament works. Victoria invited me to join her weekly podcast that day and I was delighted to get involved.

terptree provided interpreters to provide access to two of our 'How Parliament Works' training sessions, which were filmed so that they could reach a wider audience. We run these sessions every month, and have had them interpreted in the past, but we have never filmed them.

This proved so successful that we are looking to engage with terptree to interpret these sessions at least once or twice each year.

**Where did you get most value from working with terptree?**

It's really helped us to think more about accessibility. Charlotte, the Community Outreach Officer for London and the South East, is writing an equality analysis looking at the needs of all our target groups.

As a result of engaging with terptree, we want to look at using material such as film clips and getting these out to as many people as possible, Victoria and terptree are trusted in the Deaf community and this is really important to us to be able to work with a partner who has this reputation. We see an ongoing role for terptree in providing more support for the 'How Parliament Works' sessions. We are also keen on collaborating with terptree further on podcasts so that we can keep engaging with our target audiences.

**Would you recommend terptree to others?**

We are a small team of seven and have to use commercial suppliers to support our work. We are completely impartial and independent of any political party, and it is vital for us to work with a trusted partner who can give us access to a wider audience.

What's great is that terptree bring a wider social and community dimension to the party, and this is key for us in the work we are doing, and plan to do, to increase engagement with Parliament.

# HOW TERPTREE GIVES BACK

## **terptree exist to change the world for deaf people.**

In the UK, we do this by revamping the everyday customer experience provided by the businesses, retailers and organisations. We also actively impact change across the globe.

## **Can you imagine not being allowed or not having the opportunity to attend school?**

Well, this is often the case for deaf children in developing countries.

We know that opportunities to access education in the developing world is much more lacking than what we experience here in the developed world, and this is still dependent upon what is available in the local area.

If there is a local school that the child could attend, the family need money available to fund the school placement.

Should the family have more than one child, a difficult decision may need to be made about which child/children can be put through school.

One way that we support deaf children's access to education in the developing world is by working with Buy 1 Give 1, a global business initiative on a mission to create a world full of giving.

Businesses pay a membership fee to fund BIG1's developments, innovations and operations which means that 100% of what we give goes directly to the projects we support

When you connect with us on LinkedIn, do business with terptree or make a recommendation, we fund deaf-related projects across the world, which helps us towards our mission to Change the world for deaf people.

One of the projects we support is through Save the Children India and gives a deaf child quality education. Starting with a daily commute to school via school bus, then providing vocational training in carpentry, electrical wiring, gardening and more.

Whilst at school, they are given books and stationary and a nutritious meal.

## **Through embedding giving, we can change lives through our daily business activities.**



## HOW TERPTREE GIVES BACK

Learn more today

[www.terptree.co.uk/giving](http://www.terptree.co.uk/giving)



# TERPTREE IS CHANGING THE WORLD FOR DEAF PEOPLE, FIND OUT HOW...



**With a mission to Change the World for Deaf People, terptree supports some of the largest global brands and public services affecting change by creating a world class deaf customer experience.**

## BSL/ENGLISH INTERPRETING:



An interpreter ensures that deaf and hearing people can communicate with one another. This could be for something like a team meeting, job interview or to provide a deaf person access to a service. If you need highly skilled Sign Language interpreters, our team are on hand to find the most suitable Interpreter for your needs making it easy for both you and the deaf person you are working with.

## AUDIT:



You will work with us collaboratively to analyse how you serve deaf customers and those with a hearing loss across your business.

We look at current practice, conducting a gap analysis and making recommendations for future strategic direction. Once we have undertaken this thorough audit process you receive a detailed report

Implementation plan to support you in making those small changes that will have a huge impact. You will also receive recommendations for how you can take things to the next level.

## DEAF AWARENESS TRAINING



Whether you have a deaf member of the team, or you would like to make what you offer to your deaf customers a much more inclusive experience, face-to-face or online deaf awareness training from terptree is the perfect solution.

Your team will work with us to identify the learning outcomes and create a schedule for deaf awareness training within your business or organisation.

## CONSULTANCY:



Whether you are looking to ensure consistency in deaf customer experience across the business, create a winning marketing strategy to specifically target deaf customers or help

with positioning in the deaf community, terptree can help! We work with key members of teams to focus on identified projects. With any of the work we undertake, we leave your business with a comprehensive implementation plan for your team to action as well as the expert knowledge and accompanying guidance that is needed.

INTERESTED IN ATTRACTING MORE DEAF CUSTOMERS?  
CONTACT VICTORIA TODAY TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN  
CREATE A WORLD CLASS DEAF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:



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