



DEAF CUSTOMERS

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Deaf Customers Get Unique Interactive Text Service



(Left to right): John Williams (Head of Operations, Starlight Private Hire Limited), Eileen Collins, Jon Conway (MD, Starlight Private Hire Limited) and Dr Adam Beaumont (MD, (aq) limited).

Deaf residents in the West Sussex area ordering a taxi are benefiting from a new text ordering service. Starlight Private Hire have invested in a pioneering new interactive text ordering service, believed to be the first of its kind.

The problems encountered by deaf people when ordering taxis were raised by a regular deaf customer, Eileen Collins, when Starlight Private Hire Limited, based in Worthing, was taken over by new management earlier this year. This prompted new owners, Jon Conway and John Williams, to begin a review of how its services could be improved for different sectors of the community. Starlight approached Leeds-based

SMS communications experts (aq) limited, who came up with a bespoke text messaging system to address the problem. (aq) is a specialist in providing text messaging solutions for business and corporate use through their award-winning SMS text messaging portal www.sms2email.com.

The new system allows deaf customers to text a key word to the firm to order their cab - the text order is routed as an e-mail to Starlight's main office and a response confirmation is automatically generated. Eileen, who represents many local deaf societies, enlisted the help of other members to trial the system and assist in tailoring it to their needs.

Jon Conway, Managing Director of Starlight Private Hire Limited, said: "When we took over the business we found that there were certain sectors of the community whose needs weren't catered for. Eileen, as a long standing customer, talked to us about the problems deaf people in the area encounter when ordering cabs and we wanted to make the situation better for them. (aq) helped us to provide a solution through SMS text messaging which is an ideal medium for communication for this purpose."

Dr Adam Beaumont, Managing Director of (aq) limited commented: "We have seen a real increase in the use of SMS technology

for business and corporate use over the past year, proving that there are many legitimate and innovative uses of mobile messaging. But it is very rewarding to see our SMS portal being used for such a beneficial purpose as this - to improve a service provided to a sector of the community with particular needs.

"Developments such as the Talx speech software which has produced 'talking phones' for blind users have made SMS and mobile communication in general a much more socially inclusive medium and its great that this technology is now being used to promote social inclusion in other ways."