

Tips for working with and managing Deaf/Hard of Hearing Colleagues

Getting started

- If working spaces are flexible - ask the person where they would like to be positioned. A quieter, well lit area where the person can see what's going on is likely to be preferable.
- Ask the person their preferred communication methods in various work scenarios e.g. the person may lip read every day but prefer a BSL interpreter if they attend a training course.
- Consider what equipment or professional communication support might be required for them to do their job e.g. amplified phone, remote speech to text reporter or BSL interpreter etc. Funding for support and training (see below) may be available from Access to Work. Learn more: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview>
- Make arrangements in the event of emergencies. Include what to do in the event of a fire/evacuation at work and also how the deaf person should contact work if they are unable to come into work due a home emergency.
- Deaf awareness training for hearing colleagues/managers can greatly improve communication skills, confidence and understanding. Learning more about deafness improves working relationships and reduces tension if communication breaks down. Learn more: <http://www.hearfirst.org.uk/pdf/HalfDay-Working-with-Deaf-Colleagues.pdf>

Face to Face Communication

- Get the person's attention first before you start to communicate.
- Consider the persons communication preferences e.g. quiet, well lit area.
- Use clear speech, slow down a little and speak firmly. There's no need to shout.
- Maintain eye contact during the communication.
- Use gestures and be expressive to add meaning to what you're saying.
- If showing the deaf person a computer screen/document etc don't speak whilst they are looking at it. Wait until they are ready to communicate again.
- Follow up complex instructions with an email.

Formal meetings/training events

- Inform the presenter ahead of the event of the person's communication preferences.
- Give the deaf person written information about the event ahead of the meeting so they know the likely vocabulary and follow up with a summary of key points.
- Set ground rules - ask people to indicate if they are going to speak and then only one person speaks at a time.
- Seating - ask the deaf person where's best for them. Some people have better hearing on one side.
- Video clips - use signed/subtitled video clips where possible. Alternatively obtain a transcript of the clip.

Work related social events

- Recognise the effort required in communicating and understand that social situations are hard for deaf people. Many deaf people avoid them.
- If you are choosing a venue consider background noise, lighting and seating arrangements. Can the deaf person see everyone - round tables are often better for communication than people sat in long rows.

For more information, please contact us on:

Tel: 01706 872 816

Minicom Users: 18001 01706 872 816

Web: www.hearfirst.org.uk

E-mail: info@hearfirst.org.uk

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