

Tips for good communication with deaf and hard of hearing people

One to one meetings

- Before the meeting - Ask the person their preferred communication method. Consider what equipment or professional communication support might be required e.g. loop system or BSL interpreter etc
- Ideally, meet in a place that is quiet and well lit.
- Ask them where they prefer to sit.
- 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.
- Have someone available who can take notes if needed.
- If showing the deaf person a map/document etc don't speak whilst they are looking at it. Wait until they are ready to communicate again.

Formal meetings

- Before the meeting consider what equipment or professional communication support might be required e.g. loop system or BSL interpreter etc.
- Consider seating in a semi circle so everyone can see the speaker.
- Ensure the room is well lit and the light is on the speakers face.
- A good distance for lip reading is up to 6 feet away. Is there an option for deaf people to sit close to the front?
- Reduce unnecessary background noise e.g. close a window to cut out road noise.
- Have visual information to back up the speech.
- Stick to the rule of one person speaking at a time.
- The concentration required is tiring - cut down waffle, get to the point.

Written correspondence

- British Sign Language may be the person's first language and English their second language. Use plain English, free from jargon.
- Be mindful if a BSL user writes to you they may not use English word order/grammar.
- Give D/deaf people a range of contact methods, never just a phone number. Remember to do the same if you signpost them to another organisation.
- Be aware the D/deaf person may have additional disabilities e.g. dyslexia or sight loss. Larger font sizes in alternative styles and colours may be requested and required.

Website

- British Sign Language may be the person's first language and English their second language. Use plain English, free from jargon.
- Subtitle any video clips you embed in your website or have a transcript available.
- When advertising an event on your website let people know what the access arrangements are e.g. priority seating, loop system, BSL interpreter etc.
- Let people know you are happy to accept Text Relay calls by inserting 18001 in front of the telephone number on your contacts page.