

Access for Deaf and Hard of hearing people

The Council has a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty to provide accessible services and to make reasonable adjustments for our disabled colleagues and job applicants.

We signed up to the [Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commitment](#) in 2013 and the Commitment working group has put together these guidelines and information to help you when you meet, interview and work with Deaf and Hard of hearing people.

The guide is in sections so you can go directly to find what you want to know.

- The Deaf community
- Colleagues and job applicants
- Meetings with Deaf people
- Customers
- Booking and using registered BSL interpreters, note takers and lip speakers
- Equipment, how to use it and other support
- Training

The Deaf community

The Deaf community consists of people who use British Sign Language as their first or preferred language. The community exists across the country with a national cultural life, strong cohesion and a sense of common identity. The community is very proud of their heritage, rich culture and language.

The Deaf community are proud of their heritage, rich culture and language and do not see themselves as lacking hearing or as disabled

people, but as having a positive Deaf identity, with a common language, cultural heritage and distinct life experiences. Derby has the highest population of Deaf people according to the 2021 Census.

Colleagues and job applicants

Deaf and Hard of hearing colleagues and job applicants have a legal right to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

Reasonable adjustments can include:

- hearing loops
- text phones
- lip speakers
- registered British Sign Language Interpreters
- note takers or speech to text reporters
- sign video relay systems
- accessible workspaces
- disability leave, such as for training with a hearing dog.

Colleagues

- Make sure you check what reasonable adjustments your colleagues need - have a look at the Disability Equality at Work guidelines. Check they have filled in a Disability Equality at Work Reasonable Adjustment Request Agreement form and you have done a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan with the Deaf or Hard of hearing colleague – ask Facilities Management what equipment they can get to alert Deaf and Hard of hearing people that the emergency alarm is going off.
- You may be able to get help from [Access to Work](#) with communication support and equipment, but the Deaf or Hard of hearing colleague needs to contact them directly.
- When you have team meetings, training courses or colleague briefings, make sure that Deaf and Hard of hearing colleagues have all the support they need to access these meetings.

- You could arrange some Deaf equality training for other team members if the colleague agrees to this.

Job applicants

As soon as you know someone is a Deaf or Hard of hearing person you need to ask them what adjustments they need to take part in the recruitment process. Then, make sure you provide these adjustments, so that the Deaf or Hard of hearing candidate can compete on an equal basis to hearing people. Here are a few tips for creating that accessible interview...

Job applicants who lip read...

- Ask the candidate what adjustments they need – note takers and lip speakers can get booked up quickly so you need to order one as soon as you know you will need one.
- If the candidate needs a hearing loop, make sure you use a room where a loop is fitted.
- Prepare a list of the interview panel members' names and give this to the candidate when they arrive – some names can be difficult to lip read.
- Speak clearly, but don't shout or exaggerate your lip movements – shouting can distort sounds accepted through hearing aids making it very difficult to lip read.
- Use your hands, body movements and expression to help the candidate understand you, because the candidate will be relying on your facial expressions, gestures and eye contact.

- Keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking.
- Make sure the room is well lit for lip reading. Face the light rather than sitting in front of a window, so the candidate doesn't get glare when trying to lip read you.
- Ask the candidate to tell you if they do not understand a question – it's useful to have the questions written down so you can give them to the candidate to avoid any confusion.
- Use short sentences and words and if the candidate does not understand the question, find another way to word the question.
- Only one interview panel member should speak at a time, otherwise it's confusing and a struggle to listen to more than one person.
- If the candidate has a lip speaker, then make sure you look and talk to the candidate, not the lip speaker.
- If a lip speaker or note taker is attending, make sure you have enough chairs.

Job applicants who use British Sign Language...

- Ask the candidate what type of interpreting services they need – you must only book a registered British Sign Language Interpreter – even if one of your team knows how to communicate in BSL, you always must use an interpreter that is registered.

- Ask the candidate and interpreter if lighting levels in the room are acceptable. It can be difficult for candidates to understand Sign Language if the room is dark – don't sit in front of a window because of the glare.
- Always speak directly to the Deaf candidate, not the interpreter.
- Make sure any tests are accessible for Deaf and Hard of hearing candidates.

Consultation meetings with Deaf people

- Start any meeting or event with a very short Deaf equality briefing in advance, so everyone is conscious of appropriate communication in the meeting.
- Establish culturally appropriate signals to be used, such as using a 'stop' hand signal when you need a pause.
- Hands to be raised if someone wishes to say something.
- In any presentations, use visual examples with an outline of how Deaf people can be involved. This encourages Deaf people to become involved.
- At every meeting, clearly outline the purpose of the meeting – this is so that any new people will know what is expected of them.
- Clearly outline what is to be achieved during the meeting.
- Provide a short summary of previous meetings, if relevant and link action points to the current meeting. This helps those attending measure achievements and success of the consultation.
- When doing introductions at meetings, ask attendees to raise their hand so Deaf people can match their face with their name.

- When you are referring to written documents or presentations, allow time for any information to be read, for Deaf people's gaze to return to the British Sign Language interpreter, before providing a running commentary. It's not possible for Deaf people to take in information from two sources at the same time.

Customers

Our Deaf and Hard of hearing customers have a legal right to expect us to:

- provide clear information about our services in a variety of formats, including, when requested, in British Sign Language. This includes videos in BSL too where appropriate
- find out what communication methods are needed
- know about and arrange for hearing loops to be made available
- only use registered British Sign Language Interpreters
- not to refuse to get a British Sign Language Interpreter, lip speaker or note taker or any other adjustments needed – this will be classed as discrimination
- know how to use the [BSL signing service](#)
- always include a non-voice telephone number on communications where you have put a voice number, such as a mobile or Relay UK. Preferably mobile, as many Deaf and Hard of hearing people use mobiles to text. Also include the [BSL signing service](#)

Booking and using registered British Sign Language interpreters, note takers and lip speakers

You can arrange interpreters, including lip speakers and note takers using the [National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf People and Deafblind people](#) or any agency or freelance interpreter as long as they are registered.

Working with British Sign Language interpreters

Registered Interpreters, including lip speakers, speech to text interpreters and note takers are there to provide communication between hearing people and Deaf and Hard of hearing people. They work to a strict Code of Conduct. Make sure any British Sign Language interpreter you use is registered.

- Plan with Deaf people where the interpreter should sit or stand so they can see the presenter, interviewers or any visual aids
- Speak directly to the Deaf person, not the interpreter – ask how they would like to communicate...
 - No need to talk like this - it comes across as patronising.
 - Make sure your face is clearly visible and not over shadowed.
 - Use facial expressions and body language to communicate.
 - If you have any gestures or have some BSL signs – use them – it's appreciated!
 - If you are not understood, try rephrasing or writing down the words.
- Make sure only one person speaks at a time. An interpreter is physically unable to translate more than one person speaking at the same time.
- An interpreter may ask a hearing person or the Deaf person to clarify what they said – this is done to check accuracy of the interpretation.
- If a session is likely to last longer than two hours, you need to book two interpreters or make sure breaks are built into the meeting – this is because it is tiring watching interpreters for so long and also makes sure of the consistent standard of the interpretation.

- Be aware of the time delay in the interpreting process – Deaf people need time to ‘catch up’ so they are not excluded or left behind in discussions.
- There is no need to directly involve the interpreter at meetings/events – they are there to interpret between both Deaf and hearing people present.
- After the meeting ask for feedback from the Deaf people present to find out if they were happy with the standard of interpretation – if not, take this up with the agency concerned.
- Be careful of your body language
 - Deaf people don’t hear – they watch. So, your body language speaks volumes – be careful about what your facial expressions and body language says.
 - Deaf people are not reliant on the spoken word or the tone of how a message comes across. They will pick up on your body language cues far more quickly and respond to that, rather than the interpretation of the spoken word.
 - When you break eye contact, it’s a signal that the conversation has ended - is that what you wanted to happen?

Equipment, how to use it and other support

Mobiles not minicomms - We no longer use a minicom as they are getting obsolete with the introduction of new technology. This is a type of telephone with a small keyboard attached, which transmits text down the telephone line. Someone using a textphone can communicate directly with other textphone users, or with a voice telephone user using the service. Some Deaf people still use minicomms, but we can still contact them and they us by using Relay UK.

It’s Council policy to always include an accessible number alongside any voice number you include on all publications, flyers, websites, social media messages, letters and so on. You can include a work mobile number as many Deaf people use mobiles to text – but you will need to

check texts are answered. Also include our [BSL signing service](#). Derby Direct text number is **07774 333 412**

Relay UK – Relay UK – this is a system where a group of relay assistants wait to relay phone conversations between a text user and a phone user. When making a phone call a text user ‘talks’ by typing to the relay assistant who speaks their words to the phone user. The relay assistant types the phone user’s spoken reply to the text user. This is a useful system for Deaf and Hard of hearing customers as well as our colleagues and can be used with textphones, smart phones, tablets or computers...

- **hearing on the phone** - relay assistants will type what the other person is saying so that you can read their words.
- **speaking on the phone** - type what you want to say, and the relay assistant will speak your words to the other person.

If you use Relay UK to make your number accessible you need to include **18001** before your usual land line number and include the area code too so **18001 01332**

Lip speaker – a lip speaker is someone who repeats what is said, without using their voice, so others can read their lips easily. You can organise a lip speaker from [National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf People and Deafblind people](#)

Lip reading – a communication skill used by many Deaf and Hard of hearing people – if someone is lip reading you, you need to speak very clearly and remember not to put your hand over your mouth when you are speaking.

Hearing loops – make a huge difference to hearing aid users by reducing and even cutting out background noise. They transmit sound by a magnetic field that can be picked up directly by hearing aids switched to the hearing loop setting. Most hearing aids have the capacity to pick up the signal from a hearing loop

We have fitted in hearing loops in all our public meeting rooms, including the Council Chamber, Jacob Rivers Room, meeting rooms A-G, Sir

Henry Royce Room, the Joseph Wright Room, and Alice Wheeldon Room, as well as in our Better Together café at the till point and in our reception area and library.

Speech to text reporters - A speech-to-text reporter (**STTR**) provides communication support for Deaf and Hard of hearing people. They type up everything that's being said in a meeting or lecture word-for-word using a special keyboard. The text appears in real time on a laptop, projector or tablet screen where the Deaf person can see it.

Note takers – go with people to talks or meetings and provide a set of notes for people who cannot take their own, because they may be lipreading or watching a British Sign Language interpreter. There are two types of note takers...

- **Electronic** – these note takers complete their notes on a laptop and use two laptops. One screen will be for the Deaf or Hard of hearing person and the other for the note taker. The operator usually types a summary of what is being said and the text appears on the user's screen. The user then decides what they want to keep
- **Manual note taker** – manual note takers take notes by hand although most are electronic now

Sign video - provides an instant and high quality British Sign Language interpreting service via the videophone. The service is available on the Council's website [BSL signing service](#)

Training

[Derby Adult Learning Service](#) offers British Sign Language courses and Deaf Equality Courses

More information

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