

COMMUNICATION TIPS

FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

COVID-19 poses unique challenges for communication as many of those with hearing loss rely on visual cues, such as lipreading and facial expression.

This visual information is lost when someone is on a telephone or wearing a mask. Remote consultations on the telephone, or communicating with health and social care professionals wearing PPE, therefore, can be difficult or impossible for people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

The Equality Act requires reasonable adjustments to be made to support disabled people, including providing information in an accessible format.

The Accessible Information Standard puts a legal requirement on all health and social care providers to identify communication needs and provide information in people's preferred format. Accessible standards must be upheld, even in these unprecedented times.



Ask for and meet communication needs where possible

Our simple tips for health and social care professionals

Live captioning

Instead of using the telephone, where possible use video conferencing tools and add live captioning through video conferencing software.

Speech-to-text apps

There are live speech-to-text apps available, though with varying levels of accuracy. If these are used, understanding must be checked.

Video Relay

Utilise Video Relay Services, such as InterpreterNow, for British Sign Language users.

Audiology advice

Check if the person using your service is wearing a hearing aid and that it's working, if not, contact audiology locally for advice or a personal listener to amplify sound.

RelayUK

Utilise RelayUK for people with hearing loss.

General communication tips

Where lipreading is possible:



Make sure there is adequate lighting.



Get the person's attention before speaking.



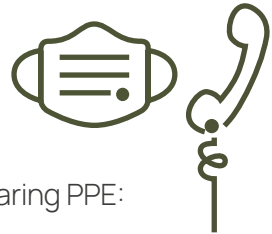
Face the person.



Use normal lip movements, facial expression and gestures

Where visual cues are not possible:

The below are particularly important when the person using your service cannot use visual cues, for example when you're on the telephone or wearing PPE:



Speak clearly

Avoid shouting or speaking unnecessarily slowly.

Re-phrase

Say things differently if people ask you to repeat what you've said or do not understand.

Repeat back

Check understanding by asking the person to repeat information back.

Clear language

Use plain language and be straight to the point.

Reduce noise

Reduce background noise as much as possible.

Write information

Where possible, also provide written information.

Interpreter

If requested, speak to a relative or friend.

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**Together, we'll
make life more
inclusive for deaf
people and those
with hearing loss
or tinnitus.**