

GOOD WORK

Norfolk

GUIDE 5

Supporting Employees Who Are Deaf or Have Hearing Loss



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Removing communication barriers and enabling equal participation

Deafness and hearing loss affect people in different ways, and there is no single approach to communication that works for everyone. Some people may use hearing aids, cochlear implants, lip reading, British Sign Language (BSL), speech or a combination of methods. The most effective support starts with asking the individual what works best for them and making practical adjustments that enable them to communicate, participate and contribute confidently at work.



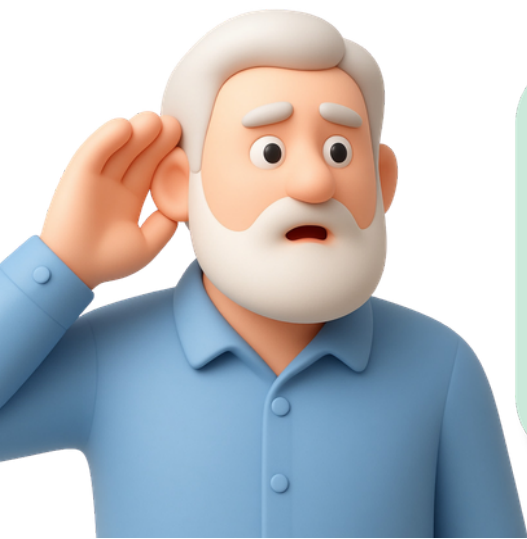
Creating inclusive and accessible communication

- Understand that hearing loss affects people in different ways. Some individuals may use hearing aids, cochlear implants, lip reading, British Sign Language (BSL), speech, or a combination of communication methods.
- Discuss and agree the most effective ways to communicate, recognising that everyone's needs and preferences will be different.
- Ensure employees can clearly see the person speaking, as visual cues, facial expressions and lip reading may support communication.
- Use clear, concise language and provide important instructions or information in writing where possible.
- Consider a variety of communication methods, including emails, instant messaging, visual aids, captions or assistive technology.
- Be mindful of background noise, which can make communication more challenging for some people.



Creating a workplace where people feel safe to ask for help

- Ensure meeting rooms and workspaces are well lit to support lip reading and visual communication.
- When chairing meetings, encourage one person to speak at a time and clearly identify who is speaking.
- Check understanding without making assumptions and encourage employees to ask for clarification when needed.
- Be patient and allow extra time where communication may take longer.
- If an employee uses BSL, Makaton, an interpreter or other communication support, discuss how these can be accommodated effectively in the workplace.
- Remember that some people may find it more difficult to follow group discussions, workplace jargon, complex terminology, humour or informal conversations.
- Consider how emergency procedures are communicated. Audible alarms, shouted instructions or warnings may not be accessible to everyone, so alternative arrangements may be required.
- Plan meetings, training sessions, workplace events and communication activities with accessibility in mind to ensure equal participation.
- If you do not understand what someone has said, politely ask them to repeat or rephrase rather than pretending to understand.



Key principle



Communication is a shared responsibility. The best approach is to ask employees how they prefer to communicate and make reasonable adjustments that enable them to participate fully and confidently in the workplace.